

Veteran Diplomat Djerejian Regales Audience with Tales of International Intrigue at Assembly Event

By Aram Arkun
Mirror-Spectator Staff

BELMONT, Mass. — The Armenian Assembly of America, currently commemorating its 50th anniversary, invited its members to attend a conversation with distinguished career US diplomat Edward Djerejian at the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR) headquarters on November 13. This was apparently Djerejian’s first public appearance in the Boston area since he and his wife Françoise moved here.

The audience was first welcomed on behalf of NAASR by its executive director, Silva Sedrakian, and by chair of the NAASR Board of Directors Judith Saryan, before Anthony Barsamian, co-chair of the Assembly’s Board of Trustees, spoke briefly of his organization’s 50th anniversary commemorations and its purchase of new office space before introducing Djerejian.

Barsamian pointed out how remarkable a resource for the Armenian community Djerejian is, having served eight US presidents, starting with John F. Kennedy. Aside from serving as US ambassador to Israel, ambassador to Syria, and Assistant Secretary of State for Near



Ambassador Edward Djerejian and Carolyn Mugar (photo Aram Arkun)

Eastern Affairs (1991-1993), Djerejian served in diplomatic posts in Jordan, Morocco, Lebanon, France and Russia. Most recently, he was the founding director of Rice University’s James A. Baker III Institute for Public Policy.

An Armenian Goes to Washington and then Abroad

Assembly Board of Trustees President Carolyn Mugar began the conversation with Djerejian by asking him how his background as an Armenian-American shaped his thinking as a diplomat.

Djerejian said, “You bring your background to whatever you do and I think that being Armenian of the first generation of the Genocide, born in New York, you have a sense of history, not intellectually but through osmosis.” The fact that his parents survived that tragedy gave him, he said, “That feeling that see DJEREJIAN, page 10

Pashinyan Warns of ‘Genocide’ in Karabakh

By Anush Mkrtchian, Ruzanna Stepanian

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan accused Azerbaijan of planning “genocide” in Nagorno-Karabakh and urged Russian peacekeepers to restore its sole transport link with Armenia again blocked on December 12. (See related editorial on page 17.)

Pashinyan spoke with Russian President Vladimir Putin by phone as a large group of Azerbaijanis blocked the road connecting Karabakh to Armenia to demand that government officials from Baku be allowed to inspect two gold mines in Karabakh.

The authorities in Stepanakert said the demands run counter to the terms of a Russian-brokered agreement that stopped the 2020 war and are just an excuse for intimidating Karabakh’s ethnic Armenian population. Arayik Harutyunyan, the Karabakh president, charged that “ethnic cleansing” is the ultimate goal of this policy.

An Armenian government statement said that Putin and Pashinyan discussed ways of “resolving the situation in the Lachin corridor.”

“Prime Minister Pashinyan emphasized the importance of ensuring uninterrupted communication between Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh and consistent steps by the Russian peacekeeping mission in that direction,” read the statement.

The Kremlin’s readout of the call



Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan

made no mention of the road blockage. It said the two leaders paid “particular attention” to “ensuring security on the Armenian-Azerbaijani border” and restoring economic links in the region.

Putin also held a phone conversation with Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev.

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Azerbaijanis block the Lachin corridor.

Azerbaijanis Again Block the Lachin Corridor Connecting Karabakh to Armenia

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — A group of Azerbaijanis blocked the sole road connecting Nagorno-Karabakh to Armenia on Monday, December 12, for the second time in nine days.

They pitched tents at a road section near the Azerbaijani-controlled town of Shushi (Shusha), demanding a meeting with Major-General Andrei Volkov, the commander of Russian peacekeeping

forces stationed in Karabakh.

Azerbaijani government media said they are environmental activists who are demanding that government officials from Baku be allowed to inspect two Karabakh gold mines.

The Azerbaijani officials were prevented from doing that on Saturday by employees of a Karabakh mining see BLOCKADE, page 2

Noted Philanthropist Edward Avedisian Dies

LEXINGTON, Mass. — Edward Avedisian, a supporter of many Armenian organizations who made news this past fall for his \$100-million donation to Boston University, which led to the renaming of the medical school to the Boston University Aram V. Chobanian & Edward Avedisian School of Medicine, died on



Edward Avedisian

Wednesday, December 7. He was 85.

Avedisian had made the donation with the proviso that the medical school not be named for him, but for his close friend, Chobanian, its former dean. Chobanian, however, persisted and convinced him to put his name there too.

Boston University President Robert A. Brown called it “one of the most remarkable grants in the history of higher education” at a private signing ceremony at his residence in late August to accept the gift and formalize the school’s name change.

The \$100-million gift will be divided three ways: \$50 million to support scholarships for medical students, \$25 million to support endowed professorships and \$25 million to the Avedisian Fund for Excellence to keep the school at the forefront of research and teaching.

Interviewed in October, Avedisian sounded frail yet as sharp as ever, stressing the need for the wealthy to extend a helping hand. “My work is finished and that’s OK. I’ve done as much as I could,” he said.

One of the many organization to which he had donated through the years, the Armenian Missionary Association of America (AMAA), on whose board he served, and for which he was principal benefactor of AMAA’s Khoren and Shooshanig Avedisian School and Community Center, announced his passing.

“Mr. Ed Avedisian was a humble man with a very generous heart and an immense love for Armenia and Armenian heritage. His legacy will remain alive for all of us and especially the generations of students at the Avedisian School in Yerevan. Truly, this is a big loss for the Armenian nation, but we hope that his life will be an example for others to follow.” reflects AMAA Board of Directors President Dr. Nazareth Darakjian.

The son of Armenian Genocide survivors, Avedisian was born in 1937 in Pawtucket, Rhode Island. He grew up in an immigrant neighborhood where he attended public school and served as see AVEDISIAN, page 9

CUBA
Armenians In Cuba



CALIFORNIA
TCA Hosts 125th Anniversary Celebration of Birth of Yeghishe Charents



MIRROR-SPECTATOR WINTER VACATION

The Armenian Mirror-Spectator will not publish the week of December 31 as the paper will close for its annual winter break. The last issue of 2022 will be that of December 24 and the first issue back will be that of January 7, 2023



ARMENIA

NEWS from ARMENIA

Tatoyan Foundation Urges Immediate Steps to Unblock Artsakh-Armenia Road

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) — The Tatoyan Foundation, led by Armenia's former Ombudsman Arman Tatoyan, has called on the international community to take immediate measures to unblock the sole Artsakh-Armenia road closed by Azerbaijan since Monday morning. Below is the statement released by the fund on Tuesday, December 13:

"According to credible information of the Center for Law and Justice Tatoyan Foundation, 270 children have been left on the roads in the winter cold since yesterday, December 12, 2022, at 10:30 a.m., due to the closure of the only road connecting Artsakh to Armenia by persons representing the so-called 'civil' and 'environmental' movement of Azerbaijan.

This number of children was confirmed to the Foundation by the Human Rights Defender of Artsakh.

Thousands of civilians in isolation, the blockade of Artsakh has no environmental purpose. It is part of Azerbaijan's criminal policy of extermination of Artsakh Armenians. This is the special goal of the Azerbaijani authorities. To separate Artsakh from Armenia, but also to terrorize and isolate the civilian population.

Children are separated from their families, and there are serious problems with access to water, food and medical care.

Armenia HRD: Azerbaijan Seeks to Create Humanitarian Crisis

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — Azerbaijan seeks to create an unbearable humanitarian crisis for the people of Nagorno-Karabakh (Artsakh) by blocking the only road connecting Armenia and Artsakh, Armenian Human Rights Defender Kristinne Grigoryan said in a statement on Tuesday, December 13.

"Azerbaijani 'environmental activists' have blocked the only road connecting Artsakh to Armenia and to the world. Even for an uniformed viewer, the videos depicting the behavior of so called 'activists' as well as the way they talk and the things they demand from the Russian peacekeepers reveal the artificial nature of this 'manifestation,'" Grigoryan said.

"As in case of disruption of the only gas pipeline from Armenia to Artsakh earlier this year, the goal of this act happening now is the same - to create unbearable humanitarian crises forcing people to leave their homes and homeland. More than 120,000 elderly, women, children and men are trapped, their rights to life, to health care, to descent living, freedom of movement and other inalienable rights are endangered," she said.

She said such policies, which are being incited by ethnic hatred (Armenophobia), are directly authorized by the Azerbaijani authorities in contradiction with international human rights and the obligations that Azerbaijan has committed to in the tri-lateral statement.



Azerbaijanis block the Lachin corridor.

Azerbaijanis Block Lachin Corridor Connecting Nagorno-Karabakh to Armenia

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company and residents of nearby Karabakh villages. Azerbaijan's Foreign Ministry responded by sending a protest note to Moscow. It said that the Russian peacekeepers pledged to ensure the inspection during negotiations held with the Azerbaijani side.

The negotiations were held after officials from the Azerbaijani ministries of environment and economy blocked the same road section on December 3, saying that they want to investigate "illegal" mining activity in Karabakh and its "ecological consequences."

Karabakh's leadership insists that it has been properly monitoring the work of the local gold mining company. It says that Baku is simply trying to disrupt Karabakh's overland communication with Armenia and thus cause the territory's ethnic Armenian population to emigrate en masse.

A Karabakh government body on Monday condemned the latest road blockage. It said the authorities in Stepanakert are "taking all possible measures to resolve the sit-

uation while keeping in touch with the Russian peacekeeping command."

"We are convinced that as a guarantor of the security of our people and the highway, the Russian peacekeeping contingent will use all instruments to thwart such provocations and violations of agreements targeting vital rights and interests of our people," Arayik Harutyunyan, the Karabakh president, said in a statement.

Harutyunyan urged the Karabakh Armenians to "maintain calm" in the face of what he called their "ethnic cleansing" attempted by Baku.

Armenia's government denounced the Azerbaijani actions through Edmon Marukyan, an ambassador-at-large. Marukyan called it a "gross violation" of the Russian-brokered ceasefire that stopped the 2020 Armenian-Azerbaijani war.

"Hope it won't lead to humanitarian crisis and common sense will prevail," he wrote on Twitter. "Lachin corridor must function as usual."

Other, more senior Armenian officials

said last week that Baku is intent on closing the corridor.

In what may have been a related development, Russian President Vladimir Putin spoke with his Azerbaijani counterpart Ilham Aliyev by phone shortly after the road closure.

The Kremlin said that they discussed "some practical aspects" of implementing Armenian-Azerbaijani agreements brokered by Putin, notably "plans for the restoration of economic and logistical links in the South Caucasus." It gave no other details of the phone call.

Putin met with Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan on Friday, December 9, on the sidelines of a Eurasian Economic Union summit in Kyrgyzstan. Pashinyan raised with him "very big concerns in Nagorno-Karabakh" about the future of the Lachin corridor.

US Says Its 'Doing Everything' To Help De-escalate Armenia-Azerbaijan Tension

WASHINGTON (PanARMENIAN.Net) — The United States is doing everything it can so that tensions between Armenia and Azerbaijan are de-escalated, State Department spokesperson Ned Price told a briefing on Monday, December 12.

"We have consistently focused on this challenge, on the need to de-escalate tensions, on the need to set these two countries on the path to a lasting, comprehensive settlement," Price said.

"We, of course, brought the two countries together at the foreign minister level here in Washington. We did that in New York on the margins of the UN General Assembly. And Phil Reeker, our senior advisor, has been actively engaged with officials in both countries to see to it that we are doing everything we can and, most importantly, that these two countries are doing everything they can to see to it that these tensions are de-escalated."

Tension is building up as a group of Azerbaijanis have blocked the only highway connecting Armenia to Nagorno-Karabakh.

Pashinyan Warns of 'Genocide' in Karabakh

WARNING, from page 1

"Today we see consistent actions that are making fears that Azerbaijan is really organizing and preparing genocide in Nagorno-Karabakh more and more objectively," Pashinyan told earlier in the day an international conference on genocide prevention held in Yerevan.

"And in this regard, I must emphasize the provocations that are taking place, in particular, in the Lachin corridor," he said.

In Pashinyan's words, the genocide could take the form of a "physical destruction" of the Karabakh Armenians or their forced exodus.

At the same time, he said: "I believe that dialogue and cooperation, including between Baku and Stepanakert, is the most important tool for preventing genocide."

Meanwhile, Armenian opposition lawmakers blamed Pashinyan's government for what was the second road blockage in nine days. They said Yerevan failed to react adequately when the Karabakh-Armenia road was closed for several hours on December 3.

"If the Armenian authorities had been more active and appealed to the international community to exert pressure on Azerbaijan, there would not have been this repeat [of the road closure,]" said Artur Khachatryan of the opposition Hayastan alliance. "I can assure you that this is not going to be the second and the last [recurrence.]"



ARMENIA

Baku Grossly Violates International Obligation It Has Assumed, Says Yerevan

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — The Armenian Foreign Ministry has weighed in on the blocking by a group of Azerbaijanis of a corridor connecting Nagorno-Karabakh to Armenia, maintaining that Baku grossly violates the international obligation it has assumed.

The statement published on Tuesday, December 13 reads:

“In the morning of December 12, 2022, a group of people from the Republic of Azerbaijan, claiming to be “environmental activists”, set up tents near Shushi, blocking the normal and unhindered movement in the Lachin Corridor, which was created by the trilateral statement of the Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia, the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the President of the Russian Federation on November 9, 2020, in order to ensure the connection between Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenia.

“The propagandistic preparations for closing the Lachin Corridor started months ago and it is obvious that this provocation was organized by the state bodies of Azerbaijan, aiming to cut off Nagorno-Karabakh from the Republic of Armenia and thus from the outside world.

“As a result of this operation, the resi-

dents of Nagorno-Karabakh have been deprived of the right to free movement, Nagorno-Karabakh is facing the imminent threat of a food and humanitarian crisis.

“The situation is in direct contrast with point 6 of the Trilateral Statement of November 9, 2020, according to which:

“a) the Lachin Corridor shall remain under the control of the peacekeeping contingent of the Russian Federation,

“b) the Republic of Azerbaijan shall guarantee safe movement of citizens, vehicles and cargo in both directions along the Lachin corridor.

“Therefore, Azerbaijan grossly violates the international obligation it has assumed. This behavior by Azerbaijan not only demonstrates its lack of intention to address the issues of the rights and security of the people of Nagorno-Karabakh and to hold a dialogue with Stepanakert for this purpose, but also once again testifies to the fact that Baku continues pursuing the policy of ethnic cleansing towards Nagorno-Karabakh.

“The blockage of the Lachin Corridor is the practical manifestation of many alarms that Azerbaijan has adopted a policy of genocide against the Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh. The regular violations of the ceasefire regime and the provocations

by the Azerbaijani armed forces on the line of contact in Nagorno-Karabakh make the existential threat to Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh more tangible.

“We underscore that international commitments, including the strict fulfilment of the commitments undertaken by the Trilateral Statement of November 9, the refusal of the use of force or the threat of the use of force, the strict observance of the ceasefire regime, the ensuring of uninterrupted movement in the Lachin Corridor under the supervision of Russian peacekeepers are of key importance for the political settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, the establishment of lasting peace and stability in the region, and for the peaceful coexistence of peoples.

“We call the urgent attention of the entire international community, including the UN Security Council, OSCE [Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe] Minsk Group Co-Chairing and member states, that Azerbaijan’s actions may lead to a large-scale humanitarian disaster. We emphasize the necessity of launching or restarting the international mechanisms for ensuring the rights and security of the Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh, and for this purpose we shall soon start consultations with international partners.”

Karabakh Foreign Minister Warns Of Catastrophic Consequences amid Azeri Total Blockade

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — The Republic of Artsakh has been under a total blockade for more than a day, Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs of Artsakh Davit Babayan said at a press conference in Yerevan. Babayan himself is unable to return to Artsakh. He was on a visit to France and was on his way back to Artsakh via Armenia before the Lachin Corridor was blocked by Azerbaijan.

“For more than a day — for 29 hours — Artsakh has been entirely blockaded. The total blockade has begun, this is a fact. As for the question whether or not this could be the prelude for more large-scale actions, in a way this depends also from the respective reaction by the in-



Davit Babayan

TUMO Center to Open in Mannheim, Germany

YEREVAN — On December 12, TUMO, the KfW Group, and Starkmacher e.V. signed an agreement to establish a TUMO center in Mannheim, the second TUMO center in Germany. In January 2020, the first TUMO center in Germany initiated TUMO’s long-standing partnership with the KfW Group which continues through the launch of the TUMO center in Mannheim.

During the signing event, TUMO CEO Marie Lou Papazian emphasized, “We are very happy that we can contribute to helping the youth of Mannheim realize their full potential through digital education. Our partners at KfW have a clear vision of the needs of the next generation of young Germans. They have been very effective in demonstrating the TUMO concept and



The signing of the TUMO agreement in Mannheim, Germany

enlisting partners to spread it nationwide.”

The trilateral contract was signed by TUMO’s head of development Pegor Papazian, Head of Innovation of KfW Michael

Strauss, and Starkmacher e.V. Co-founders Christian Röser and Nicolas Bosch.

TUMO provides partners with software and content, which they access over the cloud, as well training, technical support, quality assurance, and assistance in setting up and launching new centers. The income received from TUMO’s international network helps augment the operational budget to offer free education to more and more Armenian students in Armenia and Artsakh.

Stefan Wintels, Chief Executive Officer of KfW Group highlighted the fact that “Digital education is a key priority for Germany’s digital advancement. TUMO enables young people to develop their digital skills in line with their interests and thus also pays dividends in strengthening Germany as a technology and industrial location. What makes TUMO special is that free acquisition of digital skills are strengthening equal opportunities and personal responsibility. This benefits our society.”

Co-founder of Starkmacher e.V. Christian Röser stated, “We are really happy to bring the TUMO concept to Mannheim in the metropolitan region of Rhein-Neckar. It’s because I never saw a more precise and outstanding concept of digital learning at the moment, worldwide. And we work a lot with European countries, with worldwide countries. So for us, it’s a big chance. Why? Because this program really focuses on the kids, focuses on the education, and the mission that we have to provide a future to the youth. Bringing TUMO to Mannheim is bringing the future to kids in Mannheim and therefore I am really thankful to the TUMO team.”

The upcoming center in Mannheim, set to open at the Mafinex Tech Center in the third quarter of next year, will have a capacity of 1,000 students, and will adopt the TUMO Berlin experience with ten learning areas: programming, music, robotics, animation, 3D modeling, filmmaking, game development, graphic design, drawing, and photography.

IMF Approves ‘Precautionary’ Loan for Armenia

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — The International Monetary Fund has approved a new \$171 million lending program for Armenia designed to strengthen the country’s resilience to potential external shocks.

The three-year Stand-By Arrangement (SBA) was unveiled on Tuesday seven months after the Armenian authorities received the final installment of a similar IMF loan worth \$415 million.

“The Armenian authorities have indicated that they will treat the arrangement as precautionary,” read an IMF statement. “The new SBA will serve as insurance in case shocks generate balance of payments needs and will support the authorities’ reform efforts.”

The statement quoted Bo Li, the fund’s deputy managing director, as saying that the country may need such funding despite achieving robust economic growth this year. He cautioned that its economic outlook is “subject to significant uncertainty due to spillovers from Russia’s war in Ukraine, global financial tightening, and a slowdown in major trading partners.”

The Armenian economy is on course to

grow by at least 11 percent this year on the back of soaring trade with and remittances from Russia. Local businesses appear to have taken advantage of Western economic sanctions against Moscow, with Armenian exports to Russia more than doubling in the first ten months of this year.

Li commended the authorities for maintaining fiscal discipline, keeping the increased public debt “on a declining path” and planning to further improve tax collection. He also praised the Central Bank of Armenia for significantly tightening its monetary policy in the face of high inflation.

“The financial system is in good health,” added the IMF official.

Incidentally, the Central Bank announced on Tuesday yet another increase in its benchmark interest rate, again citing the need to curb inflationary pressures. Its governing board set the refinancing rate at 10.75 percent, up by 0.25 percentage points.

A statement released by the bank said that although annual inflation in Armenia eased to 8.8 percent in November, global “inflation expectations” remain high.

ternational community,” Babayan said.

He warned that the absence of a proper reaction by the international community or indifference can be the reason of new bad developments.

“Impunity promotes aggression. Naturally, when they see impunity, while some members of the international community, for example Turkey, on the contrary is encouraging such actions, naturally Azerbaijan is becoming bolder and is resorting to such horrifying steps in the 21st century, in fact, threatening to starve to death an entire nation. I think that a stronger reaction across the world would have an impact,” he said.

Babayan noted that all high-level officials and government institutions in Artsakh have relayed messages to the international community regarding the peacekeeping mission and their activities. “First of all it is necessary to increase the number of peacekeepers, the 1980 persons standing along the entire length of the line of contact is a very low number. Only one, two or three peacekeeping soldiers were standing against this Azerbaijani theatrical invasion. Second, we have proposed that the Russian peacekeepers receive an international mandate because this is desirable by the UN Security Council itself. This would give international legitimacy and opportunity to prevent such provocations. Because these forces are peacekeepers, they don’t impose peace like in the case of Kosovo or elsewhere. By receiving an international mandate a new quality would be conveyed to the mission and perhaps the situation would be more stable,” Babayan said, emphasizing that once again Azerbaijan has grossly violated the November 9, 2020 trilateral statement.

INTERNATIONAL

EU to End Armenia-Azerbaijan Border Monitoring

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — The European Union has decided not to extend a two-month monitoring mission launched by it along Armenia's volatile border with Azerbaijan in October.

The decision made by the foreign ministers of EU member states at a meeting in Brussels was announced by Josep Borrell, the EU foreign policy chief, late on Monday, December 12.

The leaders of Armenia and Azerbaijan as well as French President Emmanuel Macron and EU chief Charles Michel reached an agreement on the mission at an October 6 meeting in Prague. It came three weeks after large-scale border clashes between Armenian and Azerbaijani forces left more than 300 soldiers dead.

French Foreign Minister Catherine Colonna said as recently on December 6 that the 40 or so civilian monitors deployed by the EU to the Armenian side of the border have "really limited the risk of escalation" and should continue their work "as long as it is needed".

However, Borrell made it clear that the mission will end as planned on December 19. He gave no reasons for the 27-nation bloc's decision not to extend it.

Artsakh Ombudsman Calls For European Union Sanctions against Azerbaijan

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) — Artsakh's Human Rights Defender Gegham Stepanyan is calling on the European Union to impose sanctions against Azerbaijan in response to its flagrant violations of the Artsakh people's rights.

"The European Union, an organization strongly protecting human rights, should impose sanctions against Azerbaijan for gross violations of the rights of 120,000 people in Artsakh," he told a news conference in Yerevan on December 13.

His comments came after a group of Azerbaijanis blocked the sole road connecting Artsakh to Armenia Monday morning.

Stepanyan underscored that the EU has not responded to Azerbaijan's criminal activity so far.

"Naturally, geopolitical and economic interests have sidelined human rights protection especially recently, but this should not be the case with the EU, which should be the first to respond to the current situation and stand up for human rights," he said.

Artsakh's caretaker Foreign Minister David Babayan said, for his part, that numerous letters had been sent to European structures to warn over the threats posed by the closure of the Lachin corridor.

"We expect the EU to adequately respond to Azerbaijan's actions as they are causing a humanitarian catastrophe and are part of its genocidal policy," the official said.

Armenians In Cuba

By Carlos Antaramian
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

The image of Cuba has long been tinged with the exotic: beautiful beaches, swaying palm trees, people dancing, enjoying fine rum while smoking a Havana cigar, placidly enjoying life. "In Cuba, one enjoys life," say Cubans smiling, but that idyllic image has not resulted in the island being viewed as a favored migration destination, since what most migrants seek are better work opportunities or conditions that facilitate starting up a business and improving their material conditions of life. In colonial times, however, Cuba did receive a constant flow of migrants, mainly people coming from various regions of Spain and others forcibly expelled from several areas of Africa during the time of the slave trade. Much later, toward the end of the 19th century and into the early 20th, Cuba was not a major destination for the large migratory waves that departed Europe or the Middle East, their eyes set on the Americas. The main target, by far, was the United States (72%), followed, well behind, by Canada, Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay, and Venezuela. Other countries in the Americas, among them Mexico and Cuba, received only very small numbers of international migrants.

As a result of World War I, the US government launched a campaign to establish firmer control over the flow of immigrants crossing its borders by stipulating, among other measures, that all immigrants had to have a passport and visa. Then, in 1921, the



Photo of Hagop Kupelian in his workshop in Havana, ca. 1965 (Kupelian family collection, Havana)

or Mexico City and trying to use them to enter the US. For example, according to reports by migration agent Feri Felix Weiss, a thriving clandestine market in Havana provided passports and visas to Armenians, Jews, Greeks, Syrians, and Lebanese, among others (Libby Garland, *After They Close the Gates: Jewish Illegal Immigration to the United States, 1921-1965*, The University of Chicago Press, 2014, p. 90).

A second was to move to the border area and cross into the US illegally through one of many poorly-guarded border points. This practice, of course, would be utilized by countless thousands of migrants. A third possibility was to travel as a stowaway on boats from Cuba, reaching the shores of Florida clandestinely.

sachusetts, and New York, among other cities). Important peaks of migration occurred in the aftermath of World War II and at the end of the Cuban Revolution in 1959, by which time only 15 or 20 Armenian families remained in Cuba, most of them in Havana (perhaps 10) but some in Las Tunas (around 5), and one in Holguín.

As an anthropologist interested in that migratory movement, I have carried out fieldwork in Cuba on three occasions and conducted interviews with descendants of Armenians who lived there before migrating to the US. This article presents a small sample of findings from a larger project that I plan to develop in the coming year.

We do not know the identity of the first Armenian who arrived in Cuba. Perhaps, as occurred in Mexico, some itinerant friars or merchants arrived there when the island was still a Spanish colony, but determining this will require extensive explorations in the Migration Archives in Havana, the same source that may also make it possible to obtain lists of entries to the Port of Havana in the first decades of the 20th century and allow me to compile a register of the Armenians who sought temporary refuge in that city.

Available statistical sources in Cuba identify only 2 such Armenians, one in 1907 and one in 1908. Most Armenians were registered under other nationalities, including 299 as Greeks, 5,971 as Syrian-Lebanese, and, notably, 4,960 as Turks (Victoria Novelo, "Yucatecos en Cuba: Etnografía de una migración," CIESAS, Mexico, 2009).

Arrival

With the enactment of the Emergency Quota Act of 1921, the shipping companies that normally covered routes from various European ports to New York (Ellis Island) opened new routes, setting sail for cities like Havana in Cuba and Tampico or Veracruz in Mexico. The vast majority of Armenians on those ships were refugees from Syria, Lebanon, or Greece who had made their way to France or Spain to undertake the voyage to Cuba. Almost all of them entered the country between 1923 and 1929 and, having settled in Havana, took up various trades.

As in other Armenian diaspora communities, the shoemaker's trade was predominant. Men active in that work included Bedros Arakelian, Sarkis Azaryan, Vartan Haboian of Kharper — who would migrate to Chicago in 1949, and Hagop Kupelian, who arrived in Havana on June 26, 1927, having set out from Saint Nazaire, France. Kupelian would spend his entire life making shoes in Havana.

Others worked in diverse fields. For
continued on next page



Photo of the Armenian Democratic Liberal Party chapter in Havana (photo: ADL Archives, Baika Building, Watertown, MA)

US Congress set quotas, plagued with racism, which limited the influx of migrants from several countries in Asia, the Mediterranean, and the Middle East, including ethnic Chinese, Japanese, Italians, Jews, Lebanese, Greeks, and Armenians, who from that date onwards saw their possibilities of entering the US severely curtailed. Those circumstances forced them to look to other destinations.

Early on, these included countries seeking migrants like Argentina, Brazil, and Uruguay. Some opted to go to Cuba or Mexico, often with the idea of settling there only temporarily before taking advantage of their proximity to the US to obtain the required visa and migrate definitively northwards. One option consisted in purchasing false documents in Havana

Those restrictive immigration policies resulted in many immigrants entering Cuba after 1922, as at the time the country had no limitations on, or obstacles to, immigration. In fact, in 1924 the Cuban government had reached an accord with the US to receive numerous Armenians who were being expelled from Greece in those years ("Canada and Cuba Offer Refuge to Armenians. Near East Relief Plans to Assist 50,000 Who Must Leave Greece," *Washington Post*, September 1, 1924). This led to the momentary formation of an Armenian community that may have numbered over 2,000 individuals, though their numbers decreased as people obtained visas allowing them to enter the US and settle there (especially in Providence, Rhode Island, Waukegan, Illinois, Watertown, Mas-



INTERNATIONAL

Armenian Genocide Books by Gust, Kévorkian Translated Into Farsi

By Muriel Mirak-Weissbach

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

Two seminal studies of the Armenian genocide have recently appeared in Iran, in Farsi (Persian) translations. The first is Wolfgang Gust's monumental collection of documents from the German Foreign Ministry archives, which detail what Imperial Germany knew or did not know, did or did not do, while the Young Turk regime leadership of its wartime Ottoman allies was carrying out the Genocide against the Armenians and other Christian minorities. Gust's book, first published in German in 2005, was released in English by Berghahn in 2014, titled, *The Armenian Genocide in the Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Germany in 1915-16*.

Now the voluminous collection is available in Farsi, translated by Parvin Daneshvar and published by Afkar. When *Tehran Times* announced its appearance some months ago, it reported that, beginning in 1915, Armenians "were exiled from their land, and in the process of deportation 1.5 million of them were killed." It went on: "The 1915-1916 annihilation of the Armenians was the archetype of modern genocide, in which a state adopts a specific scheme geared to the destruc-

tion of an identifiable group of its own citizens."

To explain the significance of the publication, it wrote, "Official German diplomatic documents are of great importance in understanding the genocide, as only Germany had the right to report day-by-day in secret code about the ongoing genocide." And, the Iranian daily also noted the relevance of this historic case more broadly: "The motives, methods and after-effects of the Armenian Genocide echoed strongly in subsequent cases of state-sponsored genocide." Such publications, it went on, may function also as prevention. "Studying the factors that went into the Armenian Genocide not only gives us an understanding of historical genocide, but also provides us with crucial information for the anticipation and possible prevention of future genocides."

Wolfgang Gust is presented as "an independent scholar based in Germany," formerly with "the highly respected German news magazine *Der Spiegel*," and author of two earlier works on the same subject as well as many articles. Not mentioned in the article is the fact that Gust has made these foreign ministry archive documents available online, in German and English, www.armenocide.net.

The second important work released in Farsi translation is *The Armenian Genocide: A Complete History* by French historian Raymond Kévorkian, again published by the Afkar publishing house in Tehran. As reported in *Tehran Times*, this volume, originally published in 2006, was translated into Persian by Saeid Karimpur.

Kévorkian's well-known study, the newspaper explains, "provides an account of the origins, events and consequences of the years 1915 and 1916." The author "explains and analyses the debates that occurred within the elite circles of the Young Turks, and traces the roots of the violence that would be raged upon the Ottoman

Armenians." It notes a unique aspect of the work in its "geographical account of the Armenian genocide, documenting its course region by region, including a complete account of the deportations, massacres and resistance that occurred." Furthermore, the Iranian press review highlights Kévorkian's depiction of "the role that the Armenian Genocide played in the construction of the Turkish nation-state and Turkish identity, exploring the ideologies of power, rule and state violence, presenting an important contribution to the understanding of how such destruction could have occurred. Beginning with an exploration of the origins of the Young Turk Revolution in 1908, Kévorkian analyses the decision-making process which led to the terrible fate of those who were deported to the concentration camps of Aleppo and along the Euphrates."

The review notes the author's treatment of the consequences of this genocide, in economic as well as juridical terms. The material considered in the work includes "documents from the Mazhar Governmental Commission of Inquiry and the formation of courts martial by the Ottoman authorities, and the findings of the March 1920 Committee for the Protection of the Minorities in Turkey, created by the League of Nations."

Tehran Times does not explain the origin of such interest in the Armenian genocide, which has led to the appearance of these two books at this time. One may merely speculate. Armenia and Turkey are both neighbors of Iran in a time of extraordinary regional tensions, expressions of broader geopolitical conflict. Certainly, these books may contribute to helping Iranians understand both nations better, not only in their inter-connected history, but also in the reemergence of hostility, as manifested in Azerbaijan's aggressions in Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenia, with backing from Turkey.

from previous page

example, Alicia Boyadjian, today a resident of Las Tunas, told me that her maternal grandfather, Haigaz Mamasian, began as a stevedore on the docks, later worked as a door-to-door clothing salesman, and finally established a store. In the 1930s, he bought a house in Arroyo Naranjo, in the "Reperto Cuervo" area of Havana.

She also said that her father, Stepan Boyadjian, settled in Las Tunas where he ran a store named El Sol de Oriente, travelling frequently to Havana where an organized Armenian community held collective activities. On one of those trips he met Ana Agavni Mamasian and they decided to marry in Las Tunas in 1936, where their daughters, Siran, Isabel, and Alicia, were born.

Another man who moved to Las Tunas was Kevork Khachadurian, working first as a street peddler, then as a barber. Upon the death of Khosrob Chantikian, he acquired a textile store called La Nueva Armenia. He would later migrate to the US, selling the store to Hagop Haladjian, whose children remain in Las Tunas.

Institutions

Although the Armenian community in Cuba never managed to build enduring institutions, like churches, members of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (Tashnaksutiun) did establish two Committees (Gomidehs), one in Havana called Ishkhan (founded on June 17, 1925), the other in Las Tunas named Shant (founded around 1926). Those two Committees were in constant communication with the Central Committee in Boston to report the quotas sent and activities carried out and to request seals, books, and diverse articles that they required to function correctly.

In one of their letters, we learn that Hagop Kevorkian and Dikran Moskenderian were requesting the Committee's authorization to move from Havana to Las Tunas. The chairman of the Ishkhan Committee in Havana in 1927 was Sahag K. Nigolian, who decided to move to Las Tunas in the 1930s, where he set up a store called Casa Nigolian that sold hardware and watches and remained in operation into the 1960s. I have also learned that in 1928, a resident

of Mexico named Nerses Odabachian, who was very active in the Tashnaksutiun in Mexico City, spent a few months in Havana directing the Ishkhan Committee, before returning home. In the 1940s, he too succeeded in moving to the US, settling in Fresno,



Photo of Shahin Khodigian on the streets of Havana, ca. 1927

California.

The Armenian Red Cross had an affiliate in Havana that, in 1930, had some 50 members, including the executive officers Azniv Joukjoukian, Arshaloys Aslanian, Zabel Jerahian, Makrouhi Zakarian, and Noyemzar Kimatian.

Around 1934, the Armenian Revolutionary Federation founded a school called Armenia. A magnificent photo, property of the Rafaelian family of Rhode Island, shows 49 children there with their teacher, Nouritza Tavlian, and the Committee's Board of Directors: Manuk Nahabedian, Aram Mikaelian, Zabel Basmadjian, Markar Khimatian, and Arshag Topalian.

The members of the Armenian Democratic Liberal Party (ADL, or Ramgavar)

also created an affiliate in Havana. Around 1929, it had its own locale where over 70 people would gather, as a photo conserved by the Kasparian family in Havana, the Partamian family in Havana, and the ADL Archives in Watertown, Massachusetts, indicates. The image includes members of the Pilibosian family.

Associations of compatriots from the same village, city or region (compatriotic unions) were another key element in maintaining the Armenian identity and in preserving links with relatives or countrymen in other parts of the world. One of the first associations created in Havana was that of Armenians of Baghin (Palu; see *History of the House of Baghin* (in Armenian), published by the Baghin Reconstruction and Educational Union, *Hairenik* Press, Boston, 1966, pp. 125-128).

On Sunday, April 3, 1927, the home of M. Nahabedian was the site of a meeting of the Council of Natives of Baghin where the decision was taken to create a chapter of the Union for the Reconstruction and Education Lovers of the People of Baghin, which would have close ties to the Baghintun group in Providence, Rhode Island. At that meeting, Mkrtich Khboyan was elected president and Khimatian as secretary. Members included Sarkis and Vartan Azarian, Hovhannes, Manuk and Grigor Nahabedian, Hrach and Grigor Zorabedian, and Hovagim Khotoian. The chapter was dissolved on July 3, 1930, but re-established in 1934, enduring until its final dissolution in March, 1943, after almost all members had migrated to Providence.

The chapter ran a small school and helped Armenians of Baghin who were sick or in need. Always short on funds, it received support from the seat in Providence. Another member of that compatriot group

was Shahin Khodigian, who had arrived in Havana at the tender age of 10. At first, he supported himself and his mother by dying shoes. On September 6, 1937, he married Marie Sadjonian and, a few years later their daughters, Diana and María, were born in Havana. The family migrated to the US around 1961.

The Dikranagerd compatriotic group (Dikranagerd Hay Mioutiun Havanayi Masnajiugh) was founded in Havana around 1930. Members included Boghos Kebabjan, Levon Sudjian, Ashod Yaghlegian, Mgrdich Shaljian, Garabed Chilingirian, and several men from the Bardakian and Soojian families. It is important to note that this group included some Assyrians and some mixed Assyrian-Armenian families.

Those were the strongest compatriotic organizations in Havana, and the ones with the largest membership, but there was also a group called the Educational Union of Charsanjak (Kharper), which began to function around 1928. One of its members included Levon Kassabian. We can assume that other compatriot groups were formed in those years.

Though there was no Armenian church established, there were some pastoral visits, including the 4-week stay by Fr. Mesrob Semerjian (at age 30) from the US, financed by the Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU) (see Christopher Hagop Zakian, ed., *Fr. Arten Ashjian contributor, The Torch was Passed: The Centennial History of the Armenian Church of America*, St. Vartan Press, 1998, p. 40).

Clearly, the Armenian community in Cuba created numerous groups and organizations of various kinds. The number of surnames and individuals registered in their files allows us to estimate that the population may have exceeded 2,000 people. I am currently compiling a census and documenting the Armenian presence in Cuba with the intention of authoring a book on this topic.

(If a reader has information, documents, or photos on Armenians who may have lived in Cuba, please contact cantaramian@gmail.com.)

INTERNATIONAL

Greece Compares Turkey to North Korea In Latest Row with Erdogan

By Andrew Wilks

ISTANBUL (Al-Monitor) — Greek Foreign Minister Nikos Dendias likened Turkey to North Korea on December 12 after Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan warned that Turkish missiles could hit Athens in a further escalation of the war of words between the NATO allies.

“It is unacceptable and universally condemnable for threats of a missile attack against Greece to be made by an allied country, a NATO member,” Dendias said while attending a European Union meeting in Brussels. “North Korean attitudes cannot and must not enter the North Atlantic alliance.”

Growing tensions between Ankara and Athens in recent months have fueled fears of a military confrontation between the neighbors. They have come to the brink of war three times in the past half-century, and their air forces often engage in dogfights in disputed airspace.

Erdogan issued his chilling remarks at a question-and-answer session with young people in the Black Sea city of Samsun on Sunday night.

“Now we have started to produce our own missiles. This production of course frightens the Greeks,” he said, sitting in an armchair and appearing relaxed in an open-neck shirt.

“[When] you say ‘Tayfun,’ the Greek is

scared. ‘It will hit Athens,’ he says. Well, of course it will hit. If you don’t stay calm, if you try to bring something from America to the islands, from here and there, a country like Turkey ... has to do something.”

The Tayfun, or Typhoon, is one of the latest additions to Turkey’s home-grown arsenal. The short-range ballistic missile, produced by Roketsan, was test-fired from a mobile launcher in October and traveled 561 kilometers (349 miles). Athens is just 222 kilometers (138 miles) from the nearest Turkish territory.

The islands Erdogan was referring to are Greek possessions lying off Turkey’s western coast. In recent months, Ankara has complained that the deployment of military assets to islands in the Aegean and Mediterranean seas contravenes international treaties.

Greece disputes Turkey’s interpretation of the agreements and says it is acting to defend its territory, pointing to Turkey’s sizable military presence on its west coast, including a large fleet of landing craft.

Erdogan prefaced his comments about the missiles by noting investment in the Turkish defense industry under his 20-year rule, reducing reliance on foreign arms. “When we took office, the defense industry was 20-percent domestic; now it’s 80-percent domestic,” he said.

The growth of the industry is a corner-

stone of Erdogan’s vision for an independent and assertive foreign policy. Twelve years ago, there was only one

Turkish defense company among the world’s Top 100, now there are three —

Roketsan, Turkish Aerospace Industries and Aselsan — generating revenues of more than \$4.7 billion between them last year.

The Bayraktar TB2 drone is the industry’s posterchild, with the unmanned aircraft proving its worth on the battlefield in Syria, Libya, Nagorno-Karabakh and most recently Ukraine. The system has been sold to more than a dozen countries, including NATO member Poland, and potential customers reportedly include the United Kingdom, Saudi Arabia and Uruguay.

While Turkey has boosted domestic arms production, fellow NATO member Greece has looked to bolster its armed forces with overseas purchases.

Following a naval confrontation with Turkey in the eastern Mediterranean over the summer of 2020, Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis announced a spending spree on Rafale fighter jets, frigates, helicopters, anti-tank weapons, torpedoes and missiles while also recruiting new troops.

In a move likely to irritate Ankara, in June he announced a formal request to the United States for next-generation F-35 fighter jets. Turkey was kicked off the F-35 program — to which it had contributed bil-

lions of dollars in development — in 2019 in response to Ankara’s purchase of Russian S-400 air defense missiles.

Furthering the long list of senior Turkish officials who have laid the blame for escalating pressure at Greece’s door,

Defense Minister Hulusi Akar on Monday accused Athens of “unreasonable, illogical and unlawful demands and claims, as well as constant provocative actions and aggressive rhetoric.”

Citing a video conference with military commanders, the Defense Ministry said Akar had called for Greek politicians and generals to “immediately abandon their intransigent and provocative attitudes” that they are using for “domestic political purposes.”

Greek government spokesman Giannis Oikonomou, meanwhile, told an Athens news briefing on December 12 that Greece could be “neither terrorized nor intimidated,” adding: “Mr. Erdogan thinks that as many times as he repeats the irrational and unjust, he can make it rational and just. That is not going to happen.”

He said that Greece was “absolutely determined” to defend “international legality ... its sovereignty and its sovereign rights.”

(<https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2022/12/greece-compares-turkey-north-korea-latest-row-erdogan#ix-zz7nOqZQpf7>)

London’s Armenian Diocesan Center Hosts Members Of Local Community for Evening of Thanksgiving

LONDON — The Armenian Diocesan Center hosted members of the local community for a thanksgiving evening celebrating Advent in the run-up to Christmas on Friday, November 25. The evening was well attended, with those present enjoying a friendly and pleasant atmosphere.

The evening commenced with the Diocesan Primate, Bishop Hovakim Manukyan, welcoming the guests and thanking the residents for the warm welcome the center’s opening had received. During his opening remarks, Manukyan expressed his appreci-

ation to the center’s neighbors for their patience and cooperation as renovations took place, and he outlined the progress of the upgrades.

Ruth Cadbury, the Member of Parliament for Brentford and Isleworth, spoke of her happiness at the opening of the center, particularly given the acute shortage of such premises in the local community. She also expressed her strong support for the Armenian community and those issues of concern to British Armenians.

Hratch Kouyoumdjian, the vice chair of the Armenian Community Council, congratulated the Primate for the Diocese’s significant achievement in opening a dedicated center and underlined the Council’s support for its success and continued use.

Representing the London Borough of Hounslow, Councilor Lara Parizotto spoke about her many meetings with the Armenian Church Trust during the renovations and the center’s importance for the wider community.

Following the speeches, the guests enjoyed a stunning performance by the Akhtamar Dance Group and a recital by Polina Sharafyan, a student at the Royal Academy of Music.



Violinist Polina Sharafyan



Dancers with the Akhtamar Dance Group



Dr. Hratch Kouyoumdjian and Bishop Hovakim Manukyan



Councilor Lara Parizotto



Community News

Holy Trinity Holds First Christmas Bazaar Since Pandemic

CAMBRIDGE, Mass. — On December 2 and 3 Holy Trinity Armenian Church hosted their annual Christmas Bazaar. As they continued this yearly tradition to ring in the Christmas season, the hall was filled with the aromas of traditional Armenian delicacies, the sound of friends meeting under the Christmas music, and the buzz of activities happening around the Charles and Nevart Talian Cultural Hall.

This was the first in-person bazaar at Holy Trinity since the beginning of the pandemic. The joy of the Christmas season was present in the hall throughout these two days and could be seen across the faces of all who came to join in on the fun and festivities. Many people of all backgrounds and ages gathered in the hall to enjoy the food, activities, and festive booths from hand decorated wreaths and artists to fresh artisanal honey and wines from Armenia along with much more! People enjoyed all their favorite traditional Armenian foods and pastries and even were able to stock up on fan favorites such as *manti* or *choreg* to keep in their freezers for later. Saturday brought lots of



From left Aram and Becky Hintlian (who run the country store booth), Arpi Kouzouian, and Gregory Ekchian (one of the co-chairmen of the bazaar)

fun for the younger bazaar goers with children's activities being offered and a special visit from Santa and Mrs. Claus in the afternoon!

The hard-working parishioners were encouraged by the volume of people streaming through the doors all day long. The neighbors around the Holy Trinity community attended in larger numbers than ever seen before and added wonderful dimension to the already festive event. It was great to see some Clergy members from around the Eastern Diocese who visited the parish to show support on this special weekend.

Holy Trinity is thankful for all the bazaar and pre-bazaar workers who spent countless hours making these two days the success it was as well as to Bazaar co-chairs, Gregory A. Kolligian, and Gregory Ekchian, who delivered both the traditional favorites and added in new ways of meeting the needs of today's crowd. Fr. Vasken Kouzouian described himself as humbled and most appreciative of the efforts the parishioners offered to their church over the months leading up to the Bazaar days. "May God bless them all for their caring hearts and tireless endeavors" he said.



Armenians of Colorado hosted a dinner reception and panel discussion for the Society for Armenian Studies attending the 56th annual meeting of the Middle East Studies Association (MESA) in Denver on December 2, 2022 (photo M. Ginosyan Photography)

Armenians of Colorado Hosts Society for Armenian Studies Dinner and Panel in Denver

DENVER — During the 56th annual meeting of the Middle East Studies Association (MESA) in Denver, Armenians of Colorado, Inc. (AOC) hosted members of the Society for Armenian Studies (SAS) and other scholars of related fields for a dinner reception and panel discussion at the First Baptist Church of Denver.

"Our community was honored to host and hear from Armenian and non-Armenian scholars from across the USA," remarked AOC Board President Byuzand Yeremyan. "Especially in the aftermath of the 2020 Artsakh War, it is very important for the community at large, especially our youth, to learn from and interact with scholars of Armenian Studies and related fields," continued Yeremyan.

Participating in the December 2 dinner reception and panel discussion were scholars Gregory Aftandilian (American University), Alda Benjamin (University of California, Berkeley), Carel Bertram (San Francisco State University), Aslihan Günhan (Cornell University), Candace Lukasik (Mississippi State University), Stephennie Mulder (University of Texas at Austin), Nareg Seferian (Virginia Tech), Thomas Simsarian Dolan (Emory University), and Heghnar Watenpaugh (University of California, Davis).

Following a welcome message from Yeremyan, who thanked event supporters House of Bread, Kalita Grill, and the Sergoyan family, SAS and AOC member Simon Maghakyan read a statement on behalf of SAS President Christina Maranci, who is also the Mesrob Mashtots Chair in Armenian Studies at Harvard University.

"SAS is very pleased and honored to welcome scholars through Armenians of Colorado's generous hospitality," remarked Maranci. "We thank the AOC team, under the leadership of Mr. Yeremyan, for the successful event, and extend our deepest appreciation to each and every scholar that contributes to the field of Armenian studies," continued Maranci.

After dinner, the scholars participated in a panel discussion, moderated by Maghakyan, during which they introduced themselves and their ongoing research.

Afterwards, community members posed questions to the scholars. Long-time AOC member Jirair Christianian, who is also a SAS member, inquired whether the 2020 Artsakh War has impacted collaboration among Armenian and Turkish scholars. The question was responded to by Watenpaugh and Günhan who mentioned that, in practice, the collaboration has stayed relatively the same, despite some

see PANEL, page 11



A community member asks a question during the panel discussion for the Society for Armenian Studies attending the 56th annual meeting of the Middle East Studies Association (MESA) in Denver, hosted by Armenians of Colorado, on December 2, 2022 (photo M. Ginosyan Photography)

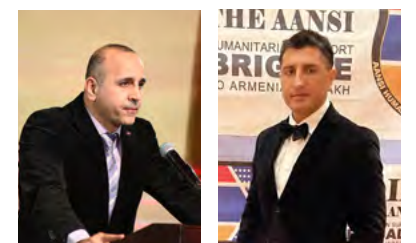
American Armenian National Security Institute Holds Gala

LOS ANGELES — The American Armenian National Security Institute (AANSI) held its second annual gala on Thursday, December 1, at the Taglyan Complex in Los Angeles. More than 200 elected officials, dignitaries, and community leaders joined the AANSI founders U.S. Army Maj. General Mark MacCarley, Karen Hovhannisyian, Counselor, Consulate General of Armenia in Los Angeles, Colonel Arman Mkrtchyan, Defense Attaché of the Embassy of Armenia, Glendale Mayor Ardy Kassakhian, Glendale Councilmember Ara Najarian, and many other high-profile public figures.

AANSI is dedicated to educating Congressional, military, and civilian national security decision-makers on American defense and strategic interests, primarily in the South Caucasus, the cornerstone of which is an anticipated robust American Armenian security cooperation agreement. AANSI believes that a strong Armenian military with a correspondingly invigorated national security posture is the best guarantor of peace and the maintenance of democratic values in one of the most contentious and volatile parts of the world, where the primary actors — Russia, Iran, Turkey and Azerbaijan, are battling for regional hegemony.

During the gala, the formation of the first-ever AANSI Humanitarian Support Brigade to Armenia and Artsakh was announced. MacCarley pointed out the positive strategic developments in the burgeoning military, economic and political alliance between the United States of America and the Republic of Armenia. The United States and Armenia have been longtime allies since WWI when tens of thousands of Armenian Legionnaires throughout the Armenian Diaspora mobilized to join forces with the Allied Powers.

Two special awards were given to journalist, activist, and filmmaker



Colonel Arman Mkrtchyan, left, and Vic Gerami

er Vic Gerami, and Colonel Arman Mkrtchyan.

AANSI's objective is to educate Americans as to significance and importance of a strong democratic Armenia to American security interests and Armenia's continued efforts to arrest international terrorism. To empower Armenia to protect its hard-won sovereignty and independence as a thriving democracy. Encourage the development, resourcing and the implementation of a strategy of deterrence against regional aggression insured by a vigorous and technologically superior Armenian military. Empower Armenia to forge a

see AANSI, page 11



OBITUARY

Sylva Der Stepanian

Longtime Diocese Staffer

NEW YORK — The Eastern Diocese mourns the loss of Sylva Der Stepanian: a leading figure on the Diocesan staff from the 1970s through the early 2000s, who pioneered its programs in Armenian language and culture. Sylva passed away on December 10, in New Jersey, after a period of illness.

To say that Sylva Der Stepanian was a legend at the Diocesan Center would be an understatement. The output of her years—the events, the publications, the teachers and students she inspired, the sheer productivity of her decades of work—is overwhelming. As the longtime director of the Diocese's Armenian language department, and founder of the Armenian Language Lab and Resource Center (ALLARC), Sylva was a fountain of creative ideas, with the boundless energy to turn those ideas into reality.

A native of Damascus, and raised in Beirut, she was the daughter of Mihran and Alice Der Stepanian, and born into a distinguished family tradition of excellence and influence in Armenian culture, the arts, and community service. Mihran Der Stepanian was a prominent Armenian writer and a journalist. He worked in the Syrian prime minister's office in Damascus for some time and was a leading figure in the Armenian Democratic Liberal Party and the Tekeyan Cultural Association.

Following in the footsteps of their father, Sylva and her elder sister Irma were also active party and Tekeyan Cultural Association members. Sylva was educated in French schools, and nourished a special affection for France and its culture throughout her life. But it was as a champion of

Armenian identity, in all its dimensions, that Sylva made her indelible mark on the world, and especially on the Armenian-American community.

She settled in America in 1971, with her mother and sister Irma, and took up her vocation as a teacher in the West New York school system. She also joined Tenaflly's St. Thomas Church, where she took on the role of Armenian School principal. There, Sylva's talent, drive, and inspirational teaching methods were noticed by the Diocesan leadership, and at the invitation of Primate Archbishop Torkom Manoogian she was appointed as superintendent of the Diocesan Armenian language schools in the US and Canada, and subsequently joined the fledgling Diocesan staff.

As founder and director of ALLARC, Sylva travelled extensively throughout the Diocese, published a veritable library of Armenian instructional volumes (most of them illustrated by the late artist Paul Sagsoorian), and conveyed the treasures of Armenian culture to several generations of students and teachers. In her energetic efforts, Sylva would collaborate with fellow staff members (notably longtime Armenian assistant to the Primate Nubar Kupelian) and a host of academic and cultural figures from the Armenian community. Her fellow staff members regarded her with the highest respect and deepest affection. With the turn of the century, Sylva retired from the Diocesan staff, but remained a vital presence in the church, and took on a new role as a benefactor of cultural and educational projects in Armenia, the Middle East, and America. She undertook these alongside her beloved elder sister Irma, who prede-



ceased Sylva in June of this year. True to their family tradition, the two sisters together were heroic advocates of the Armenian identity and culture—sharing the same spirit, the same high standards and convictions, and the same lifelong vocation of loving outreach. Our community is deeply indebted to them both.

The funeral was on December 14, start-

ing with a service at St. Vartan Armenian Cathedral (630 Second Ave., New York City). Burial was at George Washington Memorial Park in Paramus, NJ.

She leaves the family of her late brother, Manouk; the members of the Der Stepanian, Chalian, and Tarpinian families; and by countless colleagues, co-workers, friends and loved ones.

Eghisa (Kelian) Hagopian

Noted for Hospitality, Excellent Cooking

WATERTOWN — Eghisa (Kelian) Hagopian of Watertown died peacefully in her home December 7, 2022. She was the wife of the late Sahag Hagopian, mother of Vartouhie (Hagopian) Dagg and her husband Christopher of Ashland and Antranig Hagopian and his wife Peggy of Wakefield; grandmother of Jessica, Christopher, Hannah, Michael, Collin, Joseph, Nora, and Robbie. Predeceased by her brother Movses Kelian and his wife Satenik. Survived by many relatives, nieces, nephews, and dear friends.

Eghisa was born on October 7, 1928, to the late Garabed and Ohanna (Boymoushagian) Kelian in Kessab, Syria. Eghisa and Sahag were married in Beirut, Lebanon in 1961 and went on to have two beautiful children.

Eghisa and Sahag moved with their children to the United States in 1969 where they were lifelong residents of Watertown. She made many friends throughout the years in her work as a seamstress and assembly worker, as well as through the Armenian community. She was an avid cook and baker, and her recipes cannot be replicated. Her delicious Armenian food and hospitality will be missed by all. You never left her house without a full stomach and a Tupperware full of leftovers.

After retiring, Eghisa cherished spending



time with her grandchildren. She devoted her life to her family and faith. Eghisa was beloved by all who knew her as friendly, helpful, kind, and generous. She will be dearly missed by all her friends she made living at the Warren Street Senior Apartments for the past ten years.

Funeral services were held at Saint Stephen's Armenian Apostolic Church, Watertown, on Monday, December 12. Interment followed at Ridgelawn Cemetery, Watertown.

Donation

Harry and Janice Mazadoorian of Connecticut donated \$100 to the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator* to thank the paper for its important work.

THE ARMENIAN MIRROR SPECTATOR

Notice to Our Subscribers Regarding Print Version

Dear subscribers, it has come to our attention that for the past year, and specifically the past month, the delivery of the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator* has been erratic.

Please note that our paper goes to our printer at the same time every week and is mailed out the same time every week. Nothing has changed.

The delivery problems all lie with the postal service, which is understaffed, and though we have contacted them repeatedly, we have not been able to resolve the problem.

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OBITUARY

Noted Philanthropist Edward Avedisian Dies

AVEDISIAN, from page 1

president of his graduating class. He furthered his education on a scholarship to Boston University where he earned his BM and MM degrees.

Avedisian's professional career spanned four disciplines: a performing symphonic musician, a university professor, an arts administrator, a consummate investor, and philanthropist.

For 35 years Avedisian was a member of the Boston Pops and 43 seasons with the Boston Ballet Orchestra, as a clarinetist. He has also appeared outside the United States as soloist with the Armenian State Philharmonic, the Armenian Radio and TV Orchestra, and the National Chamber Orchestra of Armenia. He was also a visiting artist to Boston's sister city of Hangzhou, China.

In 1998 Edward and Pamela Avedisian founded the Avedisian School in the Malatia-Sepastia district of Yerevan, operated by the AMAA, as a tuition-free kindergarten for students from economically disadvantaged families. The current K-12 grade school building, which was officially opened on September 1, 2014, is the first building in the Republic of Armenia to achieve a Silver LEED Certification and also awarded the LEED Earth Designation. The School was the dream of Mr. Avedisian to honor his Genocide survivor parents, Khoren and Shooshanig Avedisian, who had placed an extremely high value on education throughout their lives. It is a living legacy to educate the next generations in an environment which fosters the love of learning through love, respect, service, integrity and diligence.

His philanthropy was vast and deep rooted, as it served countries located on both sides of the Atlantic. His many contributions to Armenia include philanthropic investments to the American University of

Studies and Research (NAASR), where he and Pamela were the principal benefactors of the newly constructed NAASR headquarters, which opened in 2019 and named, not after themselves, but after one of the most distinguished intellectuals in the world, Vartan Gregorian. In January 2022, Rhode Island College was the recipient of a donation in honor of Edward's sister, Zvart Onanian, naming the College of Nursing in her honor. A transformative gift was made in September 2022 to Boston University (BU) to support scholarships, endowed faculty chairs, and cutting-edge research and teaching. With this donation, the medical school was renamed "The Aram V. Chobanian & Edward Avedisian School of Medicine." The donations mentioned are not comprehensive, but a testament to Edward's vision and dedication to giving back, making quality education accessible, and leaving the world a better place for future generations.

A longtime resident of Lexington, Avedisian is survived by his wife, Pamela Wood Avedisian, his sister, Zvart Onanian, his brother, Paul Avedisian, and extended fam-



Edward Avedisian in 2017, receiving an honorary degree from the American University of Armenia

ily. Edward is predeceased by his parents, Khoren and Shooshanig Avedisian, and his brother, Paramaz Avedisian. A memorial is being planned for Spring 2023.

In lieu of flowers, memorial donations can be made to the Armenian Missionary Association of America toward the Avedisian School Endowment Fund.



Edward Avedisian with the Ellis Island Medal of Honor in 2016

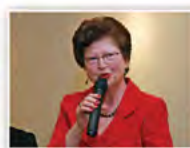
Armenia, the Tsitsernakabert Genocide Memorial and the Nork Marash Children's Cardiac Hospital, as well as the complete renovation of a school in the Haghtanag Village.

Avedisian was twice awarded the Movses Khorenatsi Medal by President Serzh Sargsyan.

In the United States, his outstanding commitment of service and philanthropy was recognized in 2016 when he was awarded the Ellis Island Medal of Honor. In 2017, a gift was made to the University of Rhode Island College of Pharmacy (URI), in honor of his late brother Paramaz Avedisian, which embodied the best of scholarship and fellowship. Recognizing Edward's accomplishments and civic-minded values, URI bestowed him with an Honorary Doctorate Degree in 2019.

Avedisian was also a Board Member of the National Association for Armenian

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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Make check payable to:
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COMMUNITY NEWS

Haley Art Gallery Hosts Holiday Open House December 17

KITTERY, Maine — The Haley Art Gallery will host its Holiday Open House on December 17, from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. with deals on original artwork and handmade gift items from across the globe. New collection of jewelry, bags and accessories from Armenia and the Republic of Georgia will be on display. Mention you're Armenian for additional 10-percent discount on top of discounted prices.

While at the gallery, view last exhibit of the season, "The Rhythms Within" with mirror art by Carlos Vega, metal art by Chris Newcomb and paintings by Tom Glover. The metal art collection by Newcomb is the last of his collection as he's venturing into print making and paintings.

Haley Art Gallery, owned and operated by Jackie Abramian and Harout DerSimonian, opened in 2005 and is housed in a renovated turn-of-the-century barn in Kittery. The gallery showcases various local and international artists as well as social impact handmade artisanal gifts made by women from across the globe. Other activities include Victorian Tea-Time Art Events, a 2-hour event with gourmet teas served in antique tea-sets along with locally-sourced delicacies. Tea-Time Art Events are by reservation only. Its space is also ideal for co-working, meetings, workshops, and retreats.

Visitors are encouraged to enjoy and learn about the stories behind each artwork and artist whose works are showcased. Open seasonally from April/May through December, the gallery's operating hours are Thursdays—Saturday, 11 a.m. to 6 p.m.

"Please join us for our December 17 Holiday Open House to find lots of unique artwork and gift items from all over the world, all with their own special stories. Every purchase supports an artist and at the same time empowers our gallery patrons to own a one-of-a-kind item that's not mass produced. And that's fully aligned with the spirit of Christmas in supporting the creative minds of our society, while making a social impact," said Abramian and DerSimonian.

The gallery will close for the season on December 17. For more information and directions, visit <https://haleyartgallery.com/> Follow on Facebook @HaleyArtGallery Instagram <https://instagram.com/haleyartgallery/> or visit the online Shop.



Handmade leather bags and pins, and earrings (Armenia) necklaces (Republic of Georgia).

Veteran Diplomat Djerejian Regales Audience with Tales of International Intrigue at Assembly Event

DJEREJIAN, from page 1

you have an extra responsibility, and the other thing that — and again, this is not intellectual but it was more motive — I should give back to this country that gave safe haven to my parents and allowed us to grow up here. So I decided to go into the Foreign Service."

Djerejian gave one witty anecdote after another about what it meant to be an Armenian in US service. He pointed out that when he began his career in 1962 as a young man in his early 20s, he was the only Armenian in the State Department.

"It was still very much an elitist Ivy League WASP organization," he said.

That made him feel, he said, like he was filling the "Armenian quota" in the Foreign Service. When he was introduced to Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, a very powerful and intimidating person, the latter noted Djerejian's last name and asked whether he was Armenian. After learning that he indeed was, Djerejian said that Kissinger quipped in his heavy Germanic accent, "Then you must be inherently subversive."

Djerejian's father was always very proud that the famous Armenian Communist Anastas Mikoyan had risen to the highest levels of the government of the Soviet Union. During the Cuban Missile Crisis Mikoyan was sent to Washington to negotiate with the US secretary of state. Djerejian was working with the deputy secretary just down the corridor and related that he thought it would be great if he could tell his father he had met Mikoyan.

So Djerejian secreted himself in the corridor and Mikoyan, surrounded by four of what Djerejian called "the ugliest bodyguards you could imagine," came out. Djerejian, in Armenian, called out, "*Baron Mikoyan, inch bes es?*" (Mr. Mikoyan, how are you?). Mikoyan suddenly stopped and with that hawklike face, as Djerejian called it, stared and asked, "*Tun ov es?*" (who are you?).

After Djerejian gave his name, Mikoyan asked whether he worked there, and when he learned that this was true, he slapped him on his back and said, "I am very happy that Armenians are doing well in this coun-

try."

Djerejian said, with his typical humor, he replied, "You know, *Baron Mikoyan*, you have not done so badly yourself."

When Mugar followed up with a question about falling back on core values when making a difficult decision, Djerejian related another anecdote in which his Armenian background played an important role. Djerejian served as US ambassador to Syria from 1988 to 1991 and he said this was his most challenging assignment, as the US had an adversarial relationship with Syria for many years, but needed Syrian cooperation on a variety of issues such as getting US hostages out of Beirut, the broader crisis in Lebanon, the Arab-Israeli peace process, human rights issues in Iraq, and stability in the Middle East as a whole.

Few US ambassadors had good access to Hafez al-Assad, the ruler of Syria, from the 1970s onward, but Djerejian knew that he liked Armenians because he considered them to be loyal citizens, and as an Alawite himself, he served as the protector of minority communities such as the Armenians. So when Djerejian came to present his ambassadorial credentials, he told Assad how his father escaped the Deir el-Zor death march and was given safe haven by a Syrian Arab family in Aleppo. His father learned of two Armenian girls in the harem of a Turkish captain and managed to rescue them. Djerejian said that if anyone had told his father as a young boy in 1919 that his son would one day come to Damascus as the US ambassador, he would have said this is crazy.

Assad was captivated by this story, Djerejian related, and this led to better relations. Djerejian and the State Department were eventually able to convince Assad to enter into direct negotiations with Israel, which he had refused to do for 40 years, fearing that Israel, with US support, to be too powerful. Assad participated in the Madrid Peace Conference in 1991, which broke the logjam in getting the rest of the Arab world to start negotiations with Israel.

Djerejian was also involved in getting the US hostages out of Beirut due to the Syrians' connections with Iran, and ob-

taining freedom of travel for Syrian Jews. Françoise at this point quietly interjected from the audience, "joining the coalition," and Djerejian thanked her, saying that it was not for nothing that Secretary of State James Baker called her Djerejian's "main brain." Getting Assad to join the Desert Storm coalition against Saddam Hussein was indeed another major accomplishment. Djerejian observed that the Bush-Baker team strategized, unlike current US foreign policy leaders, and turned the coalition into a foundation for the Madrid peace process.

Armenia and the War with Azerbaijan

Naturally, Mugar queried the senior diplomat on the current situation in Armenia after the recent war, and he retorted, "Do we have 12 hours?" before confirming that Armenia is going through one of the most critical times in its history and is very vulnerable. He said that first of all, "We as Armenians, both in Armenia and outside, should look closely at what went wrong that led Armenia to this stage and this vulnerability... And then draw the lessons from that and do everything possible to foster Armenia's sovereignty, territorial integrity, democracy and value(s)."

Djerejian stressed that there is no question in his mind that one of the lessons learned is that Armenia must enhance its deterrence power, nationally, economically, socially and its democracy, but also its military and defense capability in order to face the strategic challenges it has with Azerbaijan and Turkey. Armenia must, he continued, "constructively draw the right lessons and then chart what I would call a strategic doctrine going forward."

As far as current Armenian diplomacy is concerned, Djerejian said that it is trying to go on a multilateral axis. Since the military option is not a strong one, Armenians must, he said, "rely on what I call assertive diplomacy across the board." While depending rightly so on Russian peacekeepers, it looks towards the US, European Union, Iran and others to bolster its national security.

He said the US has become much more active in the last six months on Armenia's issues, in part with the Ukraine war leading it to see an opening for the US to

complement the Russian role in security issues in Armenia. With all the meetings taking place, he said, "a lot of it is rhetorical, but behind the rhetoric there are things that are beginning to happen... that have to make Azerbaijan and Turkey think twice, that they don't alienate the international community in being even more aggressive against Armenia."

He stressed that "delimitation of the borders is important, and obviously before all of this a sustainable ceasefire, stopping Azerbaijan's ingress into Armenian territory, forget about Artsakh, and secondly, determining what a peace agreement can be... I think it is going to take a great deal of skill on the part of Armenia to make this come together."

Djerejian warned against the ossification or bureaucratization of negotiations as in the Israeli-Palestinian case, where process becomes the endgame, and declared, "I would prefer the efficacy of direct negotiations bilaterally and multilateral by Yerevan."

Djerejian also voiced his support for Armenian negotiations with Turkey to open their common border, though he conceded that maybe people in the audience do not support this. He quoted Secretary of State James Baker who would say "You don't make peace with your friends. You make peace with your enemies," and concluded, "You have to talk to your enemies but on a principled basis and not give up your values and your most important positions. But you have to talk to your adversaries. That is what diplomacy is all about."

Djerejian also responded to questions on varied topics from the audience, always in the same witty tone, before Assembly Executive Director Bryan Ardouny made his closing remarks and gifted Djerejian with a bottle of Armenian brandy as a symbol of appreciation and welcome to Boston. As Djerejian will be serving as Senior Fellow, Middle East Initiative, at the Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs of Harvard University's Kennedy School, hopefully he will have further opportunities to expand on his ideas and speak further at local Armenian events.

Armenians of Colorado Hosts Society for Armenian Studies Panel

PANEL, from page 7

initial hesitation to conduct field research immediately after the war. Watenpugh noted that gone are the days when genocide denial was widespread in academia and also expressed regret that there is no communication between Armenian and Azerbaijani scholars.

Responding to a question from AOC member, economist, and author Yeva Aleksanyan, Simsarian Dolan further elaborated on his research into the history of Armenian visibility in the US. The scholar noted that on some occasions Armenians have had brief hypervisibility in the US, particularly in the aftermath of the Armenian Genocide, but that, in general, Armenian representation is either missing in the USA or is a caricature, as is the case today in Hollywood portrayals of Armenians in stigmas of either extremely successful celebrities, like the Kardashians, or organized crime members.

Another question from a young audience member sought clarification on efforts for Armenian student outreach, prompting several responses from panel members as to the role of scholarship in the society that also included insights into different researchers' own experiences and research endeavors. The panel discussions also highlighted new publications, in particular Bertram's *A House in the Homeland: Armenian Pilgrimages to Places of Ancestral Memory*, released by Stanford University Press in April.

Armenians of Colorado (AOC) was founded in 1979 and shortly thereafter incorporated as a 501(c)3 non-profit cultural organization. Its purpose is to create a cohesive Armenian community and to further the understanding of Armenian history, culture, language, customs, and heritage. AOC actively supports issues and concerns of the Armenian-American community in Colorado as well as those identified within the Armenian Diaspora throughout the world.

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

American Armenian National Security Institute Holds Gala

AANSI, from page 7

coherent and supportable military strategy to confront the existential threat to the security of its people and the preservation of its history, culture and national identity. Look to the United States and NATO as resources for military training, tactics, and equipment. Facilitate the exchange of American and Armenian military leadership to include attendance at seminars, symposia, and senior military colleges. Ensure that the Armenian civilian leadership is always prepared and able to exercise competent and skillful authority over its military within a thriving democracy that is Armenia.

AANSI provides information, analyses and assistance to the defense establishment, the administration, Congress, the media, and AANSI members. Visit AANSI.org for more information.

Lahvosh Roots Celebrated in Fresno

FRESNO — On Sunday, October 23, at the Fresno County Public Library-Woodward Park Branch, the Armenian Cultural Conservancy was pleased to host Agnes Saghatelyan, president, owner and granddaughter of Valley Lahvosh Baking Company founder Gazair Saghatelyan. Gazair established the bakery in Downtown Fresno in 1922, after migrating from historic Armenia (Moush) as the California Baking Company.

As the company celebrates a century of accomplishments, Agnes described the evolution of the family business that she took over from her mother, Janet Saghatelian in 1993 after graduating with a BS degree in business-management from Fresno State.

Introduced by Van Der Murgdechian and Dr. Matthew Ari Jendian, Agnes described how the company's original name changed from California Baking Company to Valley Bakery in the 1940s and was rebranded in 1994 as Valley Lahvosh Baking Company. The company has expanded and grown throughout the decades to include food service, retail, and private label sales divisions. Its products are found at Houlihan's Restaurant and Bar, The Capital Grille, Yardhouse, Stockdale Country Club (Bakersfield), The Grapevine Restaurant (Arizona), M's Pub and Lazlo's Brewery & Grill (Omaha, Nebraska), DJ's Taphouse & Grill (Minnesota), The Hardware Store Restaurant (Washington), JB Hook's Restaurant (Montana), The Toasted Frog (North Dakota), and in Costco gift baskets.

The original retail store, on the corner of M & Santa Clara, is still open for sales on Fridays from 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. and



Agnes Saghatelian with the board of the Armenian Cultural Conservancy

if you arrive when they open, you will smell the wonderful aroma of fresh-baked pita bread.

Following a Q & A session, a poem, “Midnight Mix,” written by Amy London after participating in a 100th Anniversary tour, was read by Dr. Jendian.

London is a professor/writer/poet and mother of three children and three cats. She is employed as an adjunct professor of sociology at State Center Community College District, College of the Sequoias, and Bakersfield College and posts poetry periodically on social media.

The current retail store on the corner of M & Santa Clara is still open for sales on Fridays from 8:30 am to 4 pm.



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Tekeyan Cultural Association
Metro Los Angeles Chapter

Presents

AN
EVENING
OF COMEDY III
Featuring
**HAROUT
SOGHOMONIAN**

Guest Appearance
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Arts & Culture

Sirvart Zarian

*Living a Multicultural Life
on Four Continents*

By Artsvi Bakhchinyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN/MONTREAL, Canada — All my life I have been fascinated by the literary heritage and colorful biography of the eminent Armenian writer of the 20th century, Kostan Zarian, as well as the unusual history of the Zarian family, by their multiculturalism, various talents and far-flung geography.

The offspring of this family now lives in various countries, from Italy to Ukraine, from Thailand to Canada, from Cyprus to South Africa. My subject is one of them — Sirvart Zarian — a teacher, poet and artist. The eldest of the four children of Kostan Zarian's second son, architect Armen Zarian, Sirvart has lived on four continents. She was born in Morocco (Tangier) and spent her childhood in Italy (Rome) and her adulthood in Soviet Armenia (Yerevan). She lived and worked in Africa (Ethiopia, Egypt, Sudan), and is currently based in Canada (Montreal).

Dear Sirvart, this interview with you is very exciting for me. Kostan Zarian is my favorite Armenian writer; I have read and reread him constantly since the age of 20. One time, your father said that Zarian was a persecuted writer in his own country, since his works were barely published in Armenia. Thank God, those years have passed, although some of Zarian's works still need to be brought to light.



Sirvart Zarian at Santa Marinella, Italy, in front of a piece of work by her aunt, Nevart Zarian.

You were 17 when Kostan Zarian passed away. What memories do you have from your grandfather?

My grandfather Kostan used to travel a lot. During my childhood years in Italy, he came a couple of times to Rome, where our family lived, with his wife, American artist Frances Brooks. While in Rome, he stayed with my aunt, sculptor Nevart Zarian, and her family. Kostan was

see ZARIAN, page 14



Davut Asatryan standing, with the musicians

TCA Hosts 125th Anniversary Celebration of Birth of Yeghishe Charents

By Arpi Sarafian

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

ALTADENA, Calif. — There was nothing typical about the literary and musical program presented at the Tekeyan Cultural Association's Beshgeturian Center in Altadena, dedicated to the 125th anniversary of the birth of Yeghishe Charents, the poet recognized as "the most important poet of the twentieth century" in Armenia. Instead of the usual speeches, followed by an artistic program, organizer and mistress of ceremonies Lilit Keheyian highlighted the events of the life of "our most tragic poet" through brief sketches, interspersed with recitations and performances of Charents' poems set to music. The poet's active support of Soviet Armenia, his socialist revolutionary ideology, subsequent disillusionment with that ideology, and arrest during the Great Purge of the 1930's were all noted. Yet, the focus of the evening was not the revolution. It was the beauty of our country and the beauty of our identity as Armenians.

The portrait of Charents, hoisted on an easel on one side of the stage, held everyone's gaze. Yet, nothing was intended for conspicuous display. There was no podium, only a slightly elevated platform, big enough to accommodate the four musicians — Lilit Khojayan on *kanun*, Armen

continued on next page



Lilit Keheyian



Charents event organizing committee, performers and speakers. From left rear, Khatchig Nahabedian, Ani Nahabedian, Mariette Asdghig Khanjian, Sonia Babayan, Hovsep Melkonyan; from front left Davut Asatryan, Siran Oknayan, Hratch Ajemian, Edmond Y. Azadian, Lilit Keheyian, Lora Kuyumjian, Mayda Kuredjian, Ani Kartalian, Lilit Khojayan, Salbi Mailyan, Ara Babayan

Project Save Celebrates Christmas with Supporters

By Alin K. Gregorian

Mirror-Spectator Staff

ARLINGTON, Mass. — On Sunday, December 4, Project Save Photograph Archive held a Christmas reception at the Armenian Cultural Foundation here to raise funds and display the historic value of the treasure trove the organization has. Little did organizers know their point would be made so poignantly and literally.

Executive Director Arto Vaun's talk turned included a slide presentation, the first of which featured Barlow's Market in Arlington in 1922, with proprietor Sarkis Boyaji-



From left, Project Save Executive Director Dr. Arto Vaun with Vartus Varadian

an and his staff standing outside the store. Vaun noted that not much more was known about Boyajian when a woman in the audience, Mary Ann Kazanjian, shouted that he was her grandfather. The amused and amazed audience was delighted.

Serving as master of ceremonies was photographer Winslow Martin. Explaining his longtime connection with the organization, Martin said that he first met Project Save founder Ruth Thomasian when sent to photograph her on assignment for the *Watertown Tab* newspaper. That assignment led him to "understand the importance of what they do."

He added, "The power of the art of photography" is instrumental for "remembering and honoring" the past generations. "Thank you, Ruth, for your undying passion and for creating all of this."

Thomasian for her part said, "We focus on change. Life changes and that is what our photographs try to capture." She in turn thanked the Mirak Foundation, on whose premises the program was being held, and Executive Director Ara Ghazarians.

Thomasian said she had fully stepped back from Project Save to focus on a book she is working on about the history of the organization and its inception. As for the mission of the organization and her reasons for launching it in 1975, she said, "We focused on change. Life changes and that is what photographs capture."

see SAVE, page 15



ARTS & CULTURE

TCA Hosts 125th Anniversary Celebration of Birth of Yeghishe Charents



Salbi Mailyan and Edgar Khachatryan

has reassured us: “I have come through the centuries and I depart triumphant/to centuries once again, into the bright Tomorrow.”

The December 1 event was a fitting reminder of the literary and cultural mission of the Tekeyan Cultural Association (TCA). Referring to the previous week’s festivities in New York City, “The East coast did a superb job of presenting the political accomplishments of the TCA. The West highlighted its literary and cultural mission,” noted Edmond Y. Azadian, president of the Central Board of the Tekeyan Cultural Association of the United States and Canada, when invited to deliver closing remarks.

In a few improvised minutes, Azadian was able to evoke the tragedy, but also the beauty, of one who “belonged in the international treasury of geniuses,” worthy to sit at the same table with Goethe and Homer. Commenting on the site in Yerevan where Charents was buried upon his “death” in 1937, Azadian remarked: “What should have been a sanctuary does not even have the remains of the poet.” The reference was to the renowned Charents critic Davit Gasparian going to the burial site, spade and hoe in hand, looking for the poet’s remains and finding the grave empty. Azadian made it back to his seat in tears, bringing tears to

from previous page

Stepanyan on *duduk*, Albert Ordinyan on *dhol*, and Roma Kanyan on keyboard — who accompanied the performers. Lilit stood in front of the platform blending into the audience. She nonetheless commanded attention with her anecdotes and relevant comments. It was a very warm and intimate setting.

Highlighting the love life of the poet resonated for everyone. Actor/director Davit Asatryan’s recitation, together with Lilit Keheyanyan, of “Dagh Antznagan,” the poem Charents had dedicated to Garineh Kotan-

kyan, was received with much enthusiasm. Singled out, however, was the passion Charents had for his first wife, Arpenik. The three singers, all professionals — soprano Salbi Mailyan and tenors Gagik Badalyan and Edgar Khachatryan — performed with much feeling, moving the audience to sway with the rhythm of their singing. The musical program concluded with the explosive performance, by Salpi and Edgar, of the poet’s ever popular ode to his homeland, “Yes Eem Anoush Hayastani . . .,” a song William Saroyan has described as “the most beautiful song dedicated to our country, our land, and our history . . . almost a prayer, resembling the Lord’s Prayer.”

The celebration was testimony that “Life passes but the song lives on.” Our “mournful music” may very well be “the only balm” for the poet’s “orphaned and homesick heart . . . however sharp its wounds.” Indeed, Charents reminds us



From left, musicians Armen Stepanyan, Lilit Khojayan (image obscured), Gagik Badalyan, Albert Ordinyan, Roma Kanyan

that our beauty resides in the “lilt of ancient lutes in sweet lament,” that he loved so much. “I am a singer,” says the poet, and we know that his song is here to stay. Armenia is forever. For one night at least, our existential fears and the wars in the homeland had become irrelevant. The poet



Davit Asatryan



Edmond Y. Azadian



TCA West Coast Executive Secretary Mayda Kuredjian addresses the audience.

everyone else’s eyes.

Filled with emotion, the president brought the night’s celebration full circle to the Tekeyan Cultural Association, which had organized the event as part of activities celebrating the 75th anniversary of its founding. Azadian invoked a meeting, which he described as a “coupling of geniuses,” between Charents, the famous poet of the homeland, and the famous poet of the diaspora, Vahan Tekeyan, the eponym of the organization.



ARTS & CULTURE

Sirvart Zarian: Living a Multicultural Life on Four Continents

ZARIAN, from page 12

busy meeting his fellow writers and artists at the cafes along via del Veneto or dropping at Nevart's art gallery "La Cassapana" in via del Babuino corner Piazza di Spagna. Armen, my father, who was often at the cafés of via Vittorio Veneto with his father Kostan, penned in his diary this remarkable meeting between him, Kostan and Glauco Viazzi. Viazzi was a well-known literary critic and personality in the circle of Italian writers. Despite his Italian name, he was Husik Hovsep Ashrafian. Viazzi used to write speeches for Cardinal Aghajanian for his official visits to the Vatican and elsewhere. Soon, one of Kostan's old friends joined: Anton Giulio Bragaglia was well known as a theatrical critic, founder and artistic director of the company "Independent Theatre." Bragaglia turns to Viazzi and says, "Why don't you write about Kostan Zarian's poem 'Three Songs?' Do you know that T. S. Eliot wrote his "Murder in the Cathedral" inspired by that poem, particularly from "The Voices in the Church" section?

Throughout his stays in Rome, Kostan used to meet Takuhi, his first wife. She was his best literary adviser, and Kostan was always eager to get her opinion. At one point, Takuhi and Clara Carlini translated the novel *The Ship on the Mountain* into Italian, but I have never seen it. Clara Carlini was the only daughter of Anna (Takuhi's sister), and Carlo Carlini was an official of the Italian army tragically killed in the battle of Asiago during World War I.

Whom I remember well in Italy is my grandmother Takuhi or "nonna," as we usually called her. She spent most of her last years in Cincinnato, a small village on the shoreline of the Tyrrhenian sea. My father Armen did the project and provided the manpower to build it. It was a small villa, and Takuhi named it "Villa Sirun" (beautiful in Armenian). At that time, the place was pretty wild; it had just a few scattered sandy paths edged by thick blackberry bushes. A strong smell of salt and rosemary announced the closeness of the sea. Takuhi's villa had also a big garden and a huge eucalyptus tree with a typical cement table underneath, made with lots of sea shells. We used to spend happy summer vacations with her. Our cousins Rusan and Haik would often join us from Vienna. For two months, the house would be full of laughter and giggles, especially when we tried to understand our German-speaking cousins with their Austrian dialect! As a special gesture, Takuhi would play for us on her piano some of her favorite pieces by Bach and Chopin.

When we arrived in Armenia in the summer of 1963, grandfather Kostan had already settled down in his apartment on Abovyan Street. Unfortunately, he was living alone, not what he intended to be. Frances was battling leukemia and the treatment at the local hospital didn't help. She decided to give it a last try and left for Holland, hoping for a cure. In Amsterdam, she had Hovan, their son, and her two sisters by her side. After only a couple of months, Frances passed away at the age of 63. It was a heavy blow for grandfather. Things got worse when Kostan was not allowed to leave Soviet Armenia for his wife's funeral.

For me, Frances was always an interesting person, a remarkable artist who was American many generations back. Takuhi and Frances, the first and second wives of Kostan, had an equally big role in standing by Kostan's side, a great thinker and writer always on the road, full of projects. Two female artists who didn't aspire to just being wives and mothers, but were respectively aware of their artistic life call. A concert pianist and a painter, Frances' artistic call

started at the age of fifteen, she was a student of well-known marine painter Armin Hansen. She was the youngest daughter of G. W. Brooks, founder and director of California Insurance Company in San Francisco. Her mother, Olivia E. Harris, native of Oroville, came from a family of wheat raisers at Chico, Northern California. She went to Europe and studied art in Germany, then in Paris and Italy, which was an achievement extremely rare for a woman in those days. While in Monterey Bay, Frances' subjects at the time were often the life of migrant workers and the sardine canneries in Salinas. This brings us straight to John Steinbeck's period and familiar places. John Steinbeck's father John Ernst was, for a while, the manager of the Sperry flour milling business. Frances's older sister Lorraine was Fred W. Sperry's wife. It will be interesting one day to find out what history has in store for us. Meanwhile, in closing up some of Frances' family history, let me tell you about Frances and Kostan's first encounter. As Kostan often stated, his life's major events could be found in his literary works. This is the case with "Venetian Novella" (Venetian Novella), recently translated into Italian by Ara Zarian. "Novella Veneziana," was adapted for a stage play by Teresa Tentori and performed by the "Terepia Il Teatro della figura," at Thiene Provincial Theatre in September 2022. Two of Kostan's grandchildren participated: Ara as coordinator and Anais as a performer joined the theatrical group of artists. In 2019, in the splendid "Foresteria di Villa Valmarana ai Nani," two theatrical groups joined forces, Terepia and Yerevan's theatrical group Epsidon, to present "Spring" from Kostan Zarian's "Three Songs." This time it was Akira, Kostan's great-great-granddaughter that took part in the play.

After spending years of disappointment and loneliness in Soviet Armenia, Kostan Zarian is regaining his rightful place in Armenian literature. A fresh perspective view came from the literary critic Yervand (Yuri) Khachatryan. Thanks to his determination and knowledge, he managed to publish in Yerevan more than 12 volumes of Kostan Zarian's novels, poems, essays, and critical work about literature and the arts.

Some years ago, your brother Ara Zarian published an interesting extract from Takuhi Zarian's memoirs. Do you think about publishing "I Quaderni di Nonna"?

Three years ago, my sister Anais and I started to translate Takuhi's memories from French to Armenian. It is an ongoing work of love that we will bring to a conclusion. To my knowledge, Takuhi wrote three handwritten notebooks for each of her sons and daughter. When my father Armen decided to emigrate with his family to Soviet Armenia, he took his copy of Takuhi's memories and two trunks full of Kostan's correspondence and unpublished manuscripts. A year later, when we opened the trunks, we discovered how much care Takuhi put into sorting out Kostan's huge correspondence with so many writers, artists, and historians of his time. Every bundle of letters and postcards was wrapped in a white page and bound with a black silk thread. The trunks have their own story too. They belonged to Luigi Cimara when he was on tour with his troupe of actors. Nevart, my aunt, a painter and sculptor in Rome, married Mario Cimara, an artist well known to the Roman school of painters in the 40s, together with Mafai and Scipione. Mario was the son of Luigi Cimara, and like his brother Giovanni, was an actor from a renowned dynasty of cinema, theatre artists, and musicians. Pietro Cimara, the younger brother, was a composer,

student of Ottorino Respighi (who, as it is known, composed songs based on Kostan Zarian's poems), and, for many years, conductor at the Metropolitan Opera.

I am happy to say that, after many years of safekeeping, in 2021, we, the sisters from Montreal, Québec, and my brother from Mirano, Italy, were able to send the entire archive of Kostan Zarian to Yerevan's Matenadaran.

I cherish a bright memory of my single meeting with your father, architect Armen Zarian, in 1993. For me, it was just delightful to meet an Armenian-German family in Yerevan whose family language was Italian. How was it to live as Westerners in a closed Soviet society?

Evoking strong recollections of my nine years spent in Soviet Armenia can be quite a challenge. After all, finding myself in Armenia, not knowing the language (only my father Armen knew), was frightening and sometimes hateful. As a result, I went through a long integration process. The best way to balance things out for me was to switch toward a self-preservation mode. I continued to live in two distinct realities, one at home on Abovian Street surrounded by all our familiar belongings from our house in Rome, and the outside existence, going to school, trying to make friends, constantly learning how to be part of a very different milieu. As a result, it was quite normal to continue speaking Italian at home, while our parents would often speak German.

I also cherish the memories of my friendship with your mother, Maria Gawronsky Zarian or Frau Maria, as many knew her in Yerevan. For seven years I used to visit her periodically, taking German and Italian art journals to her. It was great and unusual to see her in downtown Yerevan. She rarely complained that her life in Italy had been substituted with that of Soviet Armenia, but I am sure it was quite hard for her.

To describe my mother Maria's life in Soviet Armenia is to talk first of all about her ability to overcome such hardships that only a total dedication to her husband and family gave her the strength to overcome. It was an inhuman regime and a difficult lifestyle. To her great relief, two Armenian ladies, professors of German at the Yerevan State University, came to the rescue. To make ends meet, they started to send my mother students eager to learn German. This made our situation became less tragic. Soon my mom got a teaching position at the university and she dedicated herself to teaching her mother tongue and German literature. She was a great adviser for my father, a loving mother that endured long queues to put a decent meal on the table for her four kids. She was crucial in caring for my grandfather Kostan, especially after he was assaulted in his apartment and needed a lot of care. She welcomed many local artists and architects into our house, even when it was hard for her to understand the conversation. She was happy once the Italian architects started to come from Rome and Milan to Yerevan every summer for many years. Our house became a meeting hub for many projects, and the outcome was a superb series of documents dedicated to Armenian ancient architecture coordinated by Armen Zarian and the Academy. Out of this cooperation came out symposia dedicated to Armenian art in Italy and Yerevan, and books, just to mention a few. This unique atmosphere had a big influence on my brother Ara. As a young boy, he had the opportunity to join my father and the Italian architects on their numerous field trips to research, photograph, and measure

ancient Armenian churches. He later studied architecture and for many years dedicated himself to the restoration of religious wall paintings in churches during his trips to Armenia, publishing wonderful books and giving many lectures in Italy.

When my father passed away three months shy of his eightieth birthday in 1994, my mother Maria refused all our invitations to join us in Italy, Canada or Ukraine, where our younger brother Valter lives. We had no choice but to honor her last wish.

I keep in my library your Armenian book of poems, *Primordial Voices*, presented to me by Frau Maria, as she signed on it in German, "in honor of our friendship." That's why now it is unusual for me to have this interview with you in English, with an author who has written poems in pure literary Armenian about Yerablour, Sevan, Karintak village, etcetera.

My literary Armenian came at a price. As I already told you, I learned Armenian in Yerevan in the 1960s. There were no special classes at school to integrate kids that didn't speak Armenian! I was picking up new words from my environment, trying to figure out their meaning. The Armenian at that time in Yerevan was quite colorful, mostly a mixture of the local slang and many Turkish and Russian words. I simply couldn't tell the difference between this mixture and pure Armenian words. For me, it was all Armenian. When I got engaged to my future husband, he started to purge my Armenian until I reached a decent level. When I left Armenia, I had to learn fast Western Armenian, the language of my grandmother and father. I started to read Teotik's wonderful Almanac, Eghia Demirjibashian, and Shahan Shahnour: I had good teachers.

In my opinion, your poetry reminds me very much of Kostan Zarian style. Indeed, I have found only in poems of your grandfather and yours some words like "tsarasi"(birch tree), while the Armenian usual word for that tree is "kechi".

I believe every writer and artist have their unique style. The words I choose are selected with care according to the poem's content and tone. It is important that they voice my feelings and emotions. Yes, I use figurative language, metaphors, and symbolism. It is my style that best refers to the content. In my poems I use lots of images from nature, which express my internal rhythm best. When Susan Sontag was asked to distill her most essential advice on the craft, she answered: "Several things. Love words, agonize over sentences. And pay attention to the world."

"Primordial Voices" is dedicated to my parents and fortunately, father was able to see it before he passed away.

You lived in diverse countries, both geographically and culturally. What did your birthplace Morocco give you? I know that Spanish was your first language. What did the other countries where you have lived give to you?

During the 1950s, with the economic miracle in full swing, Armen, at the time a young architect, was working with the studio of architect Messina in Rome. He participated in an international competition to build a housing neighborhood in Tangier and he succeeded in getting the contract and building agreement. This is the reason I was born in Tangier. At that time, it was an international city and we were living in the Spanish section. I was very little when

continued on next page



ARTS & CULTURE

Project Save Celebrates Christmas with Supporters

SAVE, from page 11

She added with a laugh, “I’ve taken my marching orders from Arto.”

Vaun, who seconded his “deep gratitude” to Thomasian, made the case for photography in general and for Project Save in particular, calling it a form of “time travel.” In fact, he said, the archive is the oldest and largest one of its kind dedicated to Armenian photographs as well as one of the largest and most important photo archives in North America.

According to Vaun, the archive has about 80,000 original images from around the world, with only a fraction archived. The photos that he showed on that day captured an Armenian Student Association outing in New York City from 1912, a wedding in Yokohama, Japan in 1927, and a young dandy relaxing on a balcony in London in 1913.

Vaun said that he is trying to change things up, including hosting artists in residence. The organization’s first is Pavel Ro-



From left, Ruth Thomasian, Dr. Arto Vaun, Marta Fodor and Margaret Eckstein



Ruth Thomasian speaks with Hapet Berberian

maniko, who recently gave an online talk. In addition, Project Save now has an advisory board with ties to local universities and organizations. In addition, there has been an increase in terms of the number of employees and the focus is on growth, especially in light of the organization celebrating its 50th anniversary in 2025, he said.

The archives, Vaun said, are not only of value to Armenians, but to various towns and states, as they capture history.

He also made the case for its own space and an endowment fund. Project SAVE, he said, “has a wealth of images” and needs the “proper space that can draw people”

from previous page

we left Tangier with the ill-fated Andrea Doria (this ocean liner known for its sinking in 1956) for Italy.

Each country that I lived and worked in since my early twenties has given me a unique experience, knowledge, and unforgettable memories. Ethiopia has a special place in my heart, for my first child Her was born in Addis Ababa. We were very well received by the thriving Armenian community; they were simply wonderful. Unfortunately, after a year of our stay, a coup d’état happened against the ruling Emperor. The wealthy and proud Armenian community was hard hit, and many left. We lost most of our students at the Kevorkoff Armenian School; it was simply time to pack and go. In Egypt, we had the unique opportunity to travel and visit most of the ancient pyramids, temples and monuments. I cherish one of our travel adventures with a dear friend, artist Shant Avedissian. His many conversations about French Egyptologist and mystic Schwaller de Lubicz’s spiritual and cosmological insights into ancient Egypt and his place in the evolution

of human consciousness gave me a new, broader understanding. Another exciting debut was the presentation of the “Gayane” ballet in Cairo, Egypt, with Sonia Sarkees (Chamkertenian) as prima ballerina, Vilen Galstyan’s choreography and Robert Elibekyan’s stage design. What they were able to achieve was simply amazing. William Saroyan’s visit to the Kalousdian Armenian school in Cairo and the message he left for the students on the blackboard were unforgettable. We travelled from Egypt to Lebanon, to Nigeria, to the northern city of Kaduna, the birthplace of my second son Dyrr. All these countries, their different cultures, the many interesting encounters, and the challenges are part of the adventure that was life.

The Armenian community of Sudan, now very small, is less known. What memories you can share about it?

Sudan was our last post before emigration to Québec, Canada. In the early eighties, we were there for nearly two years. At that time, the Armenian community was maybe around 50 souls. The St. Grigor

CALENDAR

OF EVENTS & PROGRAMS

CALIFORNIA

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.

RHODE ISLAND

DECEMBER 28 — Cultural Committee of the Sts. Sahag & Mesrob Armenian Church presents “David Ayriyan - Memorial 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/>

and in addition, have temperature-controlled vaults for the photos. Vaun thanked the Armenian Museum of America in Waretown, in whose building the organization has rented space for several decades.

“I strongly feel that Project Save needs to be more financially secure at this point. Surely, after 48 years of groundbreaking and important work, such an organization deserves a healthy financial endowment for

long term growth and sustainability,” he noted.

Several staff members of Project Save were also present, including videographer Noah Brown, photo archivist Marta Fodor and Margaret Eckstein, her assistant.

A reception and silent auction took place after the speakers concluded their remarks.

For more information about Project Save, visit www.projectsavem.com.



Dr. Arto Vaun at the event

Church, the National School, and our house were all in a compound with tall walls all around it and a heavy metal gate. Soon the Shariah law came into effect and many Armenians left. Life became very difficult, and food and fuel were scarce. We needed somewhere more permanent and this time we decided to migrate to a safe country, to give our boys a stable future. When we left in 1985; only the priest, his family and a few children were left. There was no more need for a school principal and teachers.

Do you continue writing poems? In what language?

I was born into a household with a strong culture of reading and listening to classical music. I was exposed to visual arts and lots of architecture and interior design. During my teen years in Yerevan, there was a great appreciation for books. I found myself often on the queue in front of the Abovyan Street bookstore, eager to get my hands on a new publication. Today, the web got the best of it, it’s a great advantage to have so much information, but reading remains for me precious. Coming to your question, I

divide my time between reading, drawing, and writing, sometimes in Armenian, but mostly in Italian.

I once met your late husband, the literary critic, writer and teacher Manuel Keusseyan. I assume the Zarian family literary genes have been passed to your son Dyrr. I read way back his extraordinary poems on Facebook.

Dyrr is a born artist. While a young boy, he was into ceramics, drawing, writing, and later intaglio printing techniques. Writing is an integral part of his life. He writes in English and French, but mostly in English. He is fond of Eastern philosophy and poetry. He posts online his writings on the “All Poetry” site. His poems can be found in the *Late Night Poets* anthology. We are hoping to publish soon his poems.

Good luck with Dyrr’s book of poetry, Sirvart! And I wish Anais and you finish the translation of your grandmother’s memoirs in near future and publish it as a brilliant gift to all fans of Kostan Zarian’s literature!



ARTS & CULTURE

Recipe Corner



by Christine Vartanian



Melomakarona: Greek Christmas Cookies

Melomakarona: Greek Christmas Cookies

The melomakarona is an egg-shaped Greek dessert consisting of flour or semolina, sugar, orange zest and/or fresh juice, cognac (or similar beverage), cinnamon and olive oil. During rolling they are often filled with ground walnuts. made mainly from flour, olive oil, and honey. Along with the kourabiedes, it is a traditional dessert prepared primarily during the Christmas holiday season. They are also known as Finikia in some Greek regions.

Analida Braeger, the creator at Analida’s Ethnic Spoon food blog loves these traditional Greek Christmas cookies. “The Greek Church in my town hosts an annual Greek Festival during the first week of July. It’s always very hot outside, but no one seems to mind. Sometimes the traffic is backed up over a mile away. The grounds are packed with thousands of people eating mouthwatering Greek food, drinking ouzo, dancing to traditional music, and shopping for Greek products, foods, and wares. One item that has stood out for me year after year were these famous melomakarona cookies,” she says.

“After I had my share of savory Greek foods at the festival, it was time for the desserts. These sweet cookies were served on a plate with three other Greek desserts. They stood out because they smelled and tasted just like honey. Once I returned home, I knew I had to learn how to make the recipe. Now I’m able to share them with you, and I know you’ll want to make and enjoy them all year long. Melomakarona is a combination of the two words ‘meli,’ which means honey and ‘makarona.’ ‘Makarona’ comes from the ancient word, ‘makaria’ and means blessed,” she adds.

Rob Waters writes, “Few countries love honey and revere beekeepers more than Greece, and perhaps no country has a deeper history in this craft. It’s woven throughout Greek mythology and cooking.” In Greek mythology, bees were supposed to be the messengers of the gods and honey to be a source of wisdom and poetry. Honey was rumored to provide unbelievable powers. Therefore, in the Iliad and Odyssey of Homer it was mentioned, that the gods of Olympus lived on honey (nectar) and honey wine (ambrosia). In Greek the word “nectar” means “victory over death,” and Ambrosia stands for “immortality.” It is said that Aphrodite, the Greek goddess of beauty, used honey and beeswax for her beauty masks.

“These cookies are moist, crisp and bursting with flavor. Your home will be filled with the smells of Christmas with orange, honey, cinnamon, and cloves. Everyone will enjoy them, and trust me, these cookies will disappear in a blink,” says Analida.

“I have a few tips for you to make sure they turn out perfect every time,” says Analida. “First, you’ll want to make sure your syrup is totally cooled when your Greek cookies come out of the oven. I recommend making it first. You can even make it the day before. It will keep just fine in the fridge.”

“When it’s time to form the dough into cookies, be gentle with it. If you apply too much pressure or overwork it, the oil will start to seep out and your mixture might separate.

Shape the dough into flattened egg shapes and carefully use a fork to make a crosshatch pattern. This will help the cookies to absorb the syrup. For the best flavor, I recommend using authentic Greek honey. Chefs say it’s the best-tasting honey in the world. I agree with them...”

INGREDIENTS:

- Cookie dough:*
1 medium orange, zested
3/4 cup sugar
1 cup olive oil
1 cup vegetable oil
6 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
2 teaspoons baking powder
1 teaspoon baking soda
1 pinch salt
3/4 cup fresh squeezed orange juice
1/4 cup brandy, optional

Soaking syrup:

- 1 cup sugar
1 cup honey
1 1/2 cups water
1 stick cinnamon
4 whole cloves
2 slices lemon rind

Garnishes:

- 1 cup walnuts, finely chopped
1 teaspoon cinnamon for lightly dusting over cookies

PREPARATION:

Prepare the cookie dough:
Preheat oven to 350°F.
Place the sugar for the cookie dough in a bowl and press the orange zest into the sugar with a fork until well combined. Place the sugar mixture into the bowl of a stand mixer. Using a beater blade on slow, add the olive and vegetable oils until well combined.

Add the orange juice and brandy to the mixing bowl and continue to mix until well combined.

Sift together the flour, baking powder, baking soda and salt. Slowly add the flour to the mixing bowl one cup at a time. The mixture will start to pull away from the edge of the bowl and form a soft dough. It should be somewhat dense and not loose, runny or sticky.

Using a cookie scoop that holds approximately one tablespoon take a slightly heaping scoop. Drop the scoop into your palm, roll a ball then squeeze to an egg shape.

Place the dough ball on a cookie sheet lined with parchment paper. Press with a fork to make a crisscross pattern. Bake for 25-30 minutes or until golden brown. The bottoms will be more brown.

Make the syrup:

While the cookies are baking, make the syrup in a sauce pan. Add the honey, sugar, water, lemon rind, and cloves to the pan. Stir to combine and set the heat to medium-high.

Bring to a boil then set the heat to low and simmer for 10-12 minutes, uncovered. Allow to cool, remove the cloves and lemon rinds and get a large slotted spoon ready to soak the cookies.

Soak and garnish the cookies: Once the first batch of cookies come out and the second is baking, soak each cookie in the syrup. Drop them in for 10-15 seconds. Flip them over and soak for another 10-15 seconds. It is fine to soak them while they are still warm. Repeat for each batch.

Remove them from the liquid with a slotted spoon and place on a tray. Sprinkle with chopped walnuts while they are still wet and sticky from soaking. Lightly press the walnuts into the tops. Lightly dust some cinnamon on top of each cookie, if desired.

See ethnic recipes from around the world at Analida’s Ethnic Spoon with easy to follow step by step photos and instructions. Food, culture, history and languages, simmered and stirred. For Analida’s Recipe Index, go to: <https://ethnicspoon.com/recipe-index/>

Also see:

“Honey in mythology and ancient Greece” at:

[https://www.terra-greca.be/uncategorized/honey-in-mythology-and-ancient-greece/#:~:text=In%20Greek%20mythology%2C%20bees%20were,and%20honey%20wine%20\(ambrosia\).](https://www.terra-greca.be/uncategorized/honey-in-mythology-and-ancient-greece/#:~:text=In%20Greek%20mythology%2C%20bees%20were,and%20honey%20wine%20(ambrosia).)

<https://www.zingermanscommunity.com/2020/10/trea-wildflower-honey-from-greece/>

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<https://www.themediterraneanandish.com/melomakarona-greek-cookies/>

For this recipe, go to:

<https://ethnicspoon.com/melomakarona-greek-christmas-cookies/>

Analida’s Ethnic Spoon recipes have been featured on Business Insider, Buzzfeed, Food Gawker, PopSugar, Yummly and many other sites.

Note: A portion of Analida’s website revenue is used to fight world hunger as part of her family’s Catholic Christian faith and mission. Please consider a sustaining gift to <https://www.marysmealsusa.org/en/> Mary’s Meals, and read their story of hope they bring. Matthew 25:40: “Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me.” Go to: <https://www.marysmealsusa.org/en/>

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COMMENTARY

EDITORIAL

Incidents at Lachin Corridor Indicate Genocidal Intentions of Baku Authorities



By Edmond Y.
Azadian

Independent Catholic News.

The rise of the threat of genocide against the Armenians living in Karabakh is the outcome of overwhelming political forces active in the area, as well as the conflicting interests of regional and global powers. A simplistic view is that Russia is being bogged down in its war against Ukraine, and thus is failing to control its turf in the South Caucasus. Yet, there is more to that interpretation; the antagonism between Iran and Israel is placing Washington in a dichotomy in its relations with the regional nations.

A case in point is Secretary of State Antony Blinken's repeated calls to Azerbaijan's dictator Ilham Aliyev, asking for restraint against Armenia, while on the other hand the State Department through its spokesman Ned Price offers assurances that the US will help Azerbaijan, should a conflict ignite between Tehran and Baku. Iran is the only country in the region that has steadfastly spoken out to defend Armenia's borders.

President Aliyev is well aware of the complexity of the situation and has been shaping his policies accordingly. It is also obvious that Azerbaijan has been taking calculated steps based on input from domestic and international think tanks, of course, with some coaching from Ankara.

Armenian Premier Nikol Pashinyan has raised the alarm regarding the possibility of genocide against the people of Karabakh when he met in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, with Russian President Vladimir Putin, whose public answer could only be described as cynical. Indeed, his response was that trade between Armenia and Russia has skyrocketed during the current year, and he tried to put words in Pashinyan's mouth, asking the rhetorical question "Don't you agree we held a successful session of the CSTO [Collective Security Treaty Organization] recently in Yerevan?"

It is no secret that the said meeting turned into a fiasco when the group failed to take a stand against Azerbaijani aggression, consequently forcing Armenia to refuse to sign onto the resolutions of the meeting.

President Putin's cynicism was revealed once again, when Pashinyan called him to complain about Azerbaijani closure of the Lachin corridor, which may lead to ethnic cleansing in Karabakh. The Kremlin's public statement indicated merely that the two leaders had discussed "some border and economic issues."

It is believed that Mr. Putin's personal behavior — which is also reflected on his peacekeeping forces in Karabakh — changed dramatically after he signed a treaty with President Aliyev last February, two days before Russia invaded Ukraine, upgrading the status of Azerbaijan to "strategic ally." Ever since, the Russian peacekeeping forces have been rendered toothless. In fact, those forces are there are the mercy of Mr. Aliyev, who, thus far, has refused to sign their mandate and has been reminding Russia that their presence will not be tolerated beyond 2025, after their five-year term expires.

On the other hand, Arayik Harutyunyan, president of Artsakh, who was visiting France, called for the United Nations

to create an international mandate for the peacekeeping forces. That, of course, was not a realistic plea, because first, Baku will not accept such a mandate and second, Russia would refuse to place its forces under foreign control, because in that capacity, those forces cannot play the political role that Mr. Putin has in mind.

An instructive example is the case of European monitors, which was brokered by Brussels, when Pashinyan and Aliyev met there. Aliyev refused their presence on Azerbaijani soil and all they could do was visit the Armenian side.

Incidentally, Pashinyan repeated his desperate warning last week in Yerevan at the fourth Global Conference on Genocide, which was taking place there.

President Aliyev first touted a false equivalency between the Lachin corridor and the "Zangezur Corridor" which he wishes to create, by slicing a swathe of land in Armenia's sovereign territory, arguing that Baku has allowed free access through Lachin for Armenians to reach Karabakh and that therefore Azerbaijan has to enjoy the same rights through Zangezur to reach its exclave of Nakhichevan. He even threatened to open that corridor by force. Both Turkish and Azerbaijani leaders have taken turns in repeating that threat. Just last week, it was the turn of Turkish Defense Minister Hulusi Akar, who "pointed to the importance of opening regional communications in the South Caucasus."

He added that if Armenia does not allow the creation of the corridor, it will experience "a brotherly first," with the said brother being Turkey!

Recently, that demand has taken a more creative shape; indeed, Zahir Oruj, who is chairman of the Social Research Center, a legal entity akin to a think tank tied to the government of Azerbaijan, has formulated that demand in the following way: "The Zangazur [sic] Corridor must be handed to the full-scale use by Azerbaijan as a reparation for war crimes against our people!"

Mr. Oruj seems to play the role of an advocate of whitewashing Azerbaijan's misdeeds in trampling all international norms and human rights. He mentions the video clip which went viral a few months ago, featuring the dismemberment of Armenian soldiers by Azerbaijani forces. The clip created revulsion around the world, bringing condemnation to Azerbaijan. Mr. Oruj believes that all the antagonism could not have been generated by Azerbaijan's behavior and actions; instead, he argues, it must have been egged on by Armenia and he says, "Armenians have replaced the heavy defeat on the military field with superiority in

the information space, and are trying to transfer it to the armed position in the future."

He has also taken pains to absolve the country of blame by posing questions that really make clear the value of Azerbaijan. For example, he suggested "the questions asked to Joseph [sic] Borrell [the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy] were in the form of 'What matters more for EU, Azeri gas or Armenian blood?'"

He also blames Armenia for the outcry and calling for the resignation of Ursula von der Leyen, president of the European Commission, who shook Aliyev's bloody hand for a trickle of gas.

Armenia does not have the caviar or petrodollars to compete with Azerbaijan and mount that kind of worldwide campaign. Certainly, some Armenian groups around the world can take some credit for that campaign which brought to the attention of the international community the crimes committed by Azerbaijan, but that was mostly because of the latter's unruly conduct available for viewing through social media.

On December 3 and 11, a group of Azerbaijani citizens blocked the Lachin corridor and demanded to talk to Andrei see LACHIN, page 18





COMMENTARY

Azerbaijan's Laws on Its Exiting the USSR Make Karabakh's Case for Independence

By Prof. Hayk Kotanjian and Prof. Arthur Atanesyan

At the recent press conference of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation Sergei Lavrov dedicated to European security, Lavrov expressed the opinion that the leaders of Armenia and Azerbaijan “wanted to sign a peace treaty, guided by the UN Charter and Alma-Ata Declaration. And the Alma-Ata Declaration of the creation of the CIS [Commonwealth of Independent States] clearly says that the boundaries between new states will be based on the administrative borders between the republics of the former Soviet Union. At that time, the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Region definitely was a part of the Azerbaijani Soviet Socialist Republic” (https://newsarmenia.am/news/in_the_world/-eto-ne-iz-opery-peregovorov-lavrov-o-povedenii-armenii-v-peregovornom-protssesse-/).

Here we need to address the request of Armenian, Russian and American colleagues to respond to these comments, as well as to similar considerations of US Congressional Rep. Frank Pallone (D-N.J.) regarding the international legal status of Nagorno-Karabakh. Such interpretations, as mentioned, intentionally lead away from the legal essence and details of the issue toward current political preferences. We consider it necessary to discuss the issue in terms of political science and international law, providing firm and well-approbated evidence that at the time of the signing of the Alma-Ata Declaration on the creation of CIS, the Nagorno Karabakh Autonomous Oblast (NKAO) was no longer part of the Azerbaijan SSR.

The starting argument of this justification is the right to withdraw a Union Republic from the USSR, enshrined in the 72nd article of the Constitution of the USSR of 1977. The procedure for the exercise of this right was established by the law of April 3, 1990 “On the procedure for resolving issues related to the release of the Union Republic from the USSR.”

According to the 3rd article of this law, autonomous entities and national minorities have the same right to withdraw from the republic and to an independent determination of their fate, if the Soviet republic to which they belong decides to withdraw from the USSR. At the same time, the republic was obliged to hold an independence referendum, also in autonomous units and in the territories of compact residence of national minorities, managing separate counting of votes (the Law of the USSR “On the procedure for resolving issues related to the withdrawal of a Union Republic from the USSR” No. 1410-1 of April 3, 1990, G.,” Vedomosti of the Congress of People's Deputies of the USSR, Supreme Soviet of the USSR,” 1990, No. 15, in Russ.).

After the failure of the putsch in the USSR on August 19-21, 1991, the Supreme Council of Azerbaijan adopted the Declaration of Independence (Declaration of the Supreme Council of the Azerbaijan Republic “On the restoration of state independence of the Azerbaijan Republic, August 30, 1991). It was the Azerbaijani declaration to withdraw from the USSR that gave the right to the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Region and the Shahumyan District with its pre-

dominantly Armenian population to independently dispose of its fate following the aforementioned Law of April 3, 1990. Following the Law, the regional council of the Nagorno-Karabakh and the district council of Shahumyan decided to proclaim the independence of the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic at a joint meeting on September 2, 1991, within the boundaries of the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Region and Shahumyan District of the Azerbaijan SSR. Independence of the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic was proclaimed on the territory where the Constitution and legislation of the USSR as well as other Soviet laws were still in action and did not contradict the goals and principles of the declaration of independence and the characteristics of the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic (declaration “On the proclamation of the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic,” September 2, 1991).

Without communicating with the authorities of the NKAO and the Shahumyan district and attempting to clarify the opinion of the Armenian population compactly living in the region, the Supreme Council of Azerbaijan adopted a constitutional act of independence (October 18, 1991) with violation of the relevant requirements of the Law of April 3, 1990, declaring Azerbaijan's illegal decision to withdraw from the Soviet Union and its legal system, and legislatively enshrined its refusal to agree with the right of the Armenian population to determine the future of the Nagorno-Karabakh.

On November 26, 1991, the Supreme Council of Azerbaijan adopted the Law on the abolition of the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Region (Law of the Azerbaijan Republic “On the abolition of the NKAO Azerbaijan Republic,” November 26, 1991. Vedomosti of Azerbaijani Armed Forces, 1991, N 24, in Russ.). The Constitutional Supervision Committee of the USSR recognized this Law as inconsistent with the Soviet Constitution (Resolution of the Constitutional Supervision Committee of the legal acts of Supreme Soviet and its Presidium, as well as the Supreme Councils of the Azerbaijan SSR (Azerbaijan Republic) and the Armenian SSR (the Republic of Armenia on the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Region, November 28, 1991, N 28). Following the adoption of this Law by Azerbaijan, and under the requirements of international law and legislation of the USSR, a referendum was held on the independence of the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic on December 10, 1991, in the presence of international observers. It is especially important to emphasize that all necessary conditions have been met to enable the Azerbaijani minority of Karabakh to vote (Act of the Results of the Referendum on the Independence of the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic, Stepanakert, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic, December 10, 1991).

It is important to note that, in contrast to Armenia, which limited the process of exiting the Soviet Union during perestroika by only a political Declaration of Independence, the Azerbaijani Declaration on withdrawal from the USSR, as noted above, was supplemented by a constitutional act of independence, which also meant the legislative withdrawal of Azerbaijan from the legal personality

over the territory and the population of the NKAO. It is necessary to emphasize again that the Constitution and the laws of the USSR stopped working on the territory of the independence of the Azerbaijan Republic on August 30, 1991, that is, 4 months before the Alma-Ata Declaration of December 21, 1991. From the point of view of political and legal analysis, this legislative act of Azerbaijan also deduced it from the legal subjectivity of the USSR (the constitutional act of the Azerbaijan Republic on state independence of October 18, 1991, signed two months before the Alma-Ata Declaration). In other words, Azerbaijan sat down at the table of negotiations among the subjects of the USSR in Alma-Ata, having no status of this legal subjectivity.

On December 21, 1991, the leaders of the 11 Soviet republics of Alma-Ata declared the dissolution of the Soviet Union (Alma-Ata Declaration, Alma-Ata, December 21, 1991. Legal Russia. Federal legal portal (v.3.2.), in Russ.), followed by the Declaration of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR on the creation of the Commonwealth of Independent States (December 26, 1991, N 142-H), which made the further discussion of the results of the referendum on the independence of the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic with former Soviet authorities no more possible, and unnecessary.

Thus, the self-determination of the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic (as a result of the referendum on December 10, 1991, long before the signing of the Alma-Ata Declaration) is a clearly established fact under international law as well as the constitution and laws of the USSR.

It should be mentioned that this analysis of the National Defense Research University of the Ministry of Defense of Armenia has been approbated in the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) Scientific Expert Council (chaired by the Secretary General of the CSTO, Colonel General, Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Ambassador Nikolay Bordyuzha), the Institute for National Strategic Studies of the National Defense University of the United States, the Harvard University Kennedy School, and the Russian Association of Political Science.

As an example of professional conjugation of knowledge and art and their application in political and legal identification and settlement of the Karabakh conflict, the study “Nagorno-Karabakh: The X-Ray of the Conflict” by former Armenian Foreign Minister (2008–2018) and Honorary Doctor of MGIMO Eduard Nalbandyan (<https://mgimo.ru/about/news/issues/nagornyy-karabakh-rentgen-konflikta/>, in Russian) is highly recommended.

In conclusion, taking into account the actual importance of objective scientific analysis and expertise on the Nagorno-Karabakh problem in the context of the ongoing crisis transforming the world order, we emphasize the special importance of avoiding the replacement of the conflict analysis by situational and biased considerations.

(Hayk Kotanjian is a Professor of Political Science, a Lieutenant General (Retired) and Honorary President of the Political Science Association of Armenia. Arthur Atanesyan is Professor of Political Science, President of the Political Science Association of Armenia.)

Incidents at Lachin Corridor Indicate Genocidal Intentions of Baku Authorities

LACHIN, from page 17

Volkov, commander of the Russian peacekeeping forces. They posed as ecological experts, claiming the right to inspect the “illegally operated mines” in Karabakh. Unfortunately, the Russian aide blinked and the Azerbaijanis were allowed in to intimidate Karabakh Armenians. These actions, coupled with the interruption of the flow of gas in the bitter cold, leave little doubt about Baku's genocidal intentions, as expressed by an Azerbaijani government official, who has chosen to remain anonymous. He has warned Armenians that Baku is not prepared to wait indefinitely on its demands for the creation of a corridor in Zangezur and the disbanding of Karabakh Armenian forces.

He writes, “Diplomatic options have almost been exhausted. What if we were to install a [border] post at the entrance of Lachin and finish the whole process? How can you breathe with no air?”

As of this writing, Azerbaijan has closed the Lachin corridor and shut down the flow of gas to Karabakh, putting

into action its threats which were being broadcast in the news media.

As we can see, Azerbaijan does not shy away from cutting off the air to breathe to threaten Karabakh Armenians.

As far as the Karabakh defense forces are concerned, Armen Grigoryan, Secretary of Armenia's Security Council, recently stated that international guarantees are being sought and afterwards, the Karabakh people may “think of some solutions,” meaning to disarm.

Unfortunately, time and gain, it has been proven that once you lay down arms, the inevitable will happen, as Armenians did during the genocide.

Those international guarantors or forces have a way of finding legal loopholes to justify their dereliction of duty.

A more recent example was in Rwanda, in 1994, where the UN peacekeeping forces were not allowed to intervene, despite the commanders' warnings about an impending genocide. Thus, one million Tutsis were murdered by the

Hutu majority. Later on, US President Bill Clinton visited Kigali to apologize for that dereliction, which did not bring back the victims.

Karabakh forces are no match for Azerbaijan's army, which is backed by Turkey and Pakistan. But they can take a chance to defend their people until the international community wakes up.

Azerbaijan, Turkey and Russia thus far have been able to paralyze the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group's mission, which called for the self-determination of Karabakh's people through peaceful negotiations. Azerbaijan temporarily “settled” the issue by violating another OSCE principle, that which bars the use of violence. While under the deception of having solved the Karabakh crisis, Baku is exacerbating the situation through its genocidal threats, which will lead to another principle in international law. It will justify the law of remedial cessation, through which East Timor, South Sudan and Kosovo attained independence.



COMMENTARY

MY TURN



by Harut Sassounian

Washington Post Reveals Azerbaijan's Hiring of Two Retired US Generals

The *Washington Post* published last week a lengthy investigative article titled: “Air Force Feared Generals’ Foreign Consulting Jobs Would Cause Scandal” by journalists Craig Whitlock and Nate Jones. The article disclosed Azerbaijan’s offer to hire two retired US Air Force generals. The *Post* engaged in extensive legal battles with the US Air Force to reveal the concealed details of this scandalous transaction.

Between 2016 and 2021, the *Post* submitted four Freedom of Information Act requests to the US government seeking the documents in this matter. However, the Air Force either did not respond or claimed that it could not find any documents. Finally, the *Post* had to file a lawsuit in court which resulted in the judge ordering the Air Force to release 400 pages of internal documents revealing the details of these two generals’ attempts “to profit” from their previous military contacts with Azerbaijan and “Pentagon’s struggles to police such behavior,” according to the *Post*.

The *Washington Post* wrote that “during the height of war in Afghanistan, US military leaders flocked to...Azerbaijan to embrace its president, Ilham Aliyev” who was compared by the US Embassy in Baku to the “mafia boss in the ‘Godfather.’” The newspaper added: “Corruption flourished under the Aliyevs, with the CIA describing it as ‘pervasive’ and the State Department calling it ‘systemic.’” Nevertheless, the Pentagon persuaded Aliyev to open its airspace to US and NATO military supplies to go to Afghanistan. “In exchange, US officials promised a closer diplomatic partnership with Aliyev and steered \$369 million in defense contracts to Silk Way Airlines, an Azerbaijan cargo carrier that US investigators say was controlled by the government.”

“Two US Air Force generals — Duncan McNabb and William Fraser III — who oversaw the supply routes from 2008 and 2014, after retirement, tried to cash in on their Azerbaijan connections,” the *Washington Post* wrote. The United States Transportation Command (Transcom) “had awarded 2,230 cargo airlift missions to Silk Way during McNabb’s tenure, plus 1,117 missions while Fraser was in command, for a total cost of \$369 million.” Upon retiring from active duty, the four-star generals negotiated valuable consulting deals with Silk Way Airlines.

McNabb told the *Washington Post*: “he once hosted a Silk Way executive for dinner at his home at Scott Air Force Base in Illinois.” After retiring from the Air Force in December 2011, “he said, officials with Silk Way Airlines contacted him about a possible business venture.”

The US military routinely approves such jobs after retirement, however, it denied permission to General McNabb, because it had serious concerns that it would be “a potential embarrassment and a risk to national security...fearing that the consulting jobs would trigger a scandal” according to Air Force internal documents. General McNabb went to great lengths to fight the Air Force’s rejection of his job. According to a 2015 memo, General Fraser warned the

US military that “if the US government prevented him from working for Silk Way, it would face ‘blow-back’ from Azerbaijan, and that Aliyev’s government might even block US and NATO supply routes to Afghanistan in retaliation.”

Philip Deaver, a civilian Air Force lawyer, wrote in his objection that since the US had given Silk Way Airlines \$369 million, and since the two generals had managed the supply routes via Azerbaijan, it might look like McNabb and Fraser knew “that a perk of office is a lucrative advisory contract from Silk Way upon retirement.” McNabb said he had visited Azerbaijan five or six times.

General McNabb told the *Washington Post*, “he once hosted a Silk Way executive for dinner at his home at Scott Air Force Base in Illinois.” After retiring from the Air Force in December 2011, he said, “officials with Silk Way Airlines contacted him about a possible business venture. Silk Way wanted to modernize its operational control center at Heydar Aliyev International Airport in Baku. The firm invited McNabb to return to Azerbaijan in June 2013 for a visit and offered to hire him as an adviser.” That same month, “he set up a consulting firm, Ares Mobility Solutions, partnering with a retired Air Force colonel and a captain in the Navy Reserve who had worked in the airline industry. Ares signed a contract with Silk Way that paid a monthly retainer of \$10,000 plus expenses, documents show. Under the deal, McNabb was expected to travel to Baku every three to five months to work for a few days at a time.”

After assuming his Air Force position at Transcom in 2011, General Fraser flew to Baku and met with Pres. Aliyev. “Over the next three years, Fraser met with Aliyev twice in Azerbaijan and once in New York, according to the Azerbaijan’s government.”

In April 2014, Azerbaijan’s ambassador to the United States, Elin Suleymanov, visited Scott Air Force Base in Illinois to tour Transcom headquarters. He told Fraser, who was nearing retirement, that “there are many opportunities for future military and commercial cooperation” between the United States and Azerbaijan, according to a US military press release.

Within days of his retirement, Fraser received a job offer from Silk Way Group. Fraser sought in advance permission from the Air Force, stating that he “would be a consultant/advisor providing subject matter expertise” and would “help develop future business opportunities” for the pay of \$5,000 a day. However, the Air Force rejected his request. Fraser submitted a second application which was also turned down. “Fraser did not mention in his application that his son, William Fraser IV, also worked in the aviation business in Azerbaijan,” the *Washington Post* wrote. His son, “a former US Marine sergeant had taken a job two years earlier as an assistant to the president of Azerbaijan Airlines, the state-owned carrier, as a public relations and strategic communications specialist.”

US federal law requires that military personnel, who served at least 20 years, obtain permission before they accept anything of value from a foreign government or companies controlled by foreign governments. When the Air Force found out that McNabb had not sought permission in advance of his work in Azerbaijan, his subsequent application was denied. He was told that he had violated US law. “There is no criminal penalty for breaking the law, but the military can withhold retirement pay from those who do so. McNabb confirmed that the Defense Department docked his pension but declined to say how much,” the *Post* wrote.

Armenia Wants Peace, If Azerbaijan Withdraws, Stops Aggression

By Ambassador Varuzhan Nersesyan

If Azerbaijan were to immediately withdraw from the sovereign Armenian territory that it occupies and promise to halt further aggression the path could be cleared toward a comprehensive peace settlement with Armenia.

But you wouldn’t know that reading the recent op-ed in The Jerusalem Post by Azerbaijan’s ambassador to the UK (November 24) who avoids any mention that his country has attacked Armenia several times since 2020, the latest aggression just two months ago, and over that time it has seized around 140 square kilometers of Armenian territory.

The article starts with a reference to the Abraham Accords of 2020 and the full normalization of relations between Israel, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain. It states that although the context in the Caucasus is different, “a similar emphasis on the dividends of peace stands as a key element in normalization between Armenia and Azerbaijan.”

Making comparisons to the Abraham Accords is a curious choice. None of the signatories occupies the land of another and since its signing two years ago the fruits of those accords make for interesting reading. Before referring to them it would make sense for Azerbaijan to mention that the UAE’s Education Ministry is preparing

Holocaust learning materials for primary and secondary school students, and last year the region’s first Holocaust memorial exhibition opened in Dubai.

Thus, using the Abraham Accords as a misdirection, he tries, rather transparently, to drive an artificial wedge between Armenia and Israel: two ancient civilizations, both genocide survivor states, who continue to face existential threats to their survival. The fact of the matter is that Azerbaijan embodies the very values that are in contradiction with the letter and spirit of the Abraham Accords.

In Azerbaijan’s school system children are taught to hate Armenians. In one school textbook for 9- to 10-year-

MAKE NO MISTAKE, ARMENIA IS NOT AN OBSTACLE TO PEACE BUT WHAT SORT OF PEACE DOES AZERBAIJAN SEEK?

olds, a young girl is shown killing an Armenian soldier with an ax. Ironically, the ax murderer who was convicted by the Hungarian court for beheading a sleeping Armenian counterpart in Budapest is a national hero of Azerbaijan and according to the country’s ombudsman is “a symbol for the young generation.”

Azerbaijan’s ambassador also asks Armenia to stop dwelling on its past and yet his country seems determined to erase it. After years destroying thousands of Armenian religious monuments across the region which the US-based Caucasus Heritage Watch described as “a systematic, state-sponsored program of cultural erasure,” and the International Court of Justice ordered Azerbaijan to halt the destruction of Armenian heritage.

But it hasn’t stopped. For decades, various statements from Azerbaijan’s leaders are clear their intention to completely erase all traces of Armenian identity.

Make no mistake, Armenia is not an obstacle to peace but what sort of peace does Azerbaijan seek? Since the end of the Nagorno-Karabakh war in 2020, which President Aliyev admitted he launched, Armenia has accepted the five principles Azerbaijan has proposed as a basis for a settlement.

However, what Armenia guards against is Azerbaijan exploiting the border delimitation process for new territorial claims and occupation. For example, it continues to publish maps showing the south of Armenia as part of Azerbaijan. Armenia has confirmed its road network would be open for transportation between those two but that it would not whatsoever constitute an extraterritorial corridor that Azerbaijan could use as a pretext for further aggression.

The Azerbaijani ambassador’s op-ed pulses with references to normalization and the claim that “what we continue to witness is a pragmatic, reality-based Azerbaijani approach versus Armenia’s continued ideological and self-harming reluctance to become a fully integrated part of the region wherein it exists.” But as it appears, it is Armenia’s very existence with which Azerbaijan appears to have a major problem.

Furthermore, Azerbaijan’s claims to desire peace have been undermined by President Aliyev’s decision to pull out of a meeting in Brussels planned for today with Prime Minister Pashinyan, France’s President Macron and the president of the European Council, Charles Michel.

However, the same four leaders met in Prague last October where they all agreed that the quadrilateral format would again be used in Brussels. Armenia remains fully committed to a peace agenda. If Azerbaijan is serious about peace, the only way to show it is to return to negotiations instead of finding pretexts to avoid them.

(Varuzhan Nersesyan is the ambassador of the Republic of Armenia to the UK. This column appeared in the December 7 edition of the *Jerusalem Post*.)

Lemkin Institute Issue Another Red Flag Alert After Recent Blockade of Artsakh by Azerbaijan

(The following statement was issued by the Lemkin Institute for Genocide Prevention in response to the recent blockade of the Lachin Corridor by Azerbaijan for a short period. It was issued before the second blockade on December 13.)

On the morning of December 3, a group of Azerbaijanis in civilian clothes blocked the route Stepanakert-Goris, the only road that connects the Armenians of Artsakh with the Republic of Armenia. For more than two hours, approximately 120,000

Artsakh Armenians were isolated from Armenia proper and surrounded by Azerbaijanis. After several hours of negotiation with the Azerbaijani regime, the route was finally reopened and communications were re-established. In light of this new development, the Lemkin Institute for Genocide Prevention is issuing another Red Flag Alert for Azerbaijan.

The Lemkin Institute reminds the international community that this recent siege of Artsakh is not an isolated event but one

in a series of criminal actions carried out by the autocratic regime of Ilham Aliyev in Azerbaijan, which continue without serious opposition from the international community. The total impunity enjoyed by Aliyev combined with the genocidal intent of his regime and many Azerbaijanis will almost guarantee the repetition and escalation of this type of violence.

Many genocidal regimes will stage rehearsals for genocide in incremental steps, gauging the international response as they

go. The Lemkin Institute for Genocide Prevention believes that Aliyev is doing just this — setting the stage for genocide by confirming international apathy on the Artsakh issue and slowly inuring international actors to the prospect of an aggressive Azerbaijani invasion of Artsakh, which is 99.7 percent Armenian and part of Armenia’s integral cultural heritage. Apart from some courageous votes in the Spanish and French parliaments, as well as statements of support for the Republic of Armenia by American lawmakers, Aliyev has faced no public repercussions for the aggressive wars and the atrocities carried out by his military or for the hateful rhetoric of his regime.

Furthermore, the total isolation of the Armenian population of Artsakh is a clear violation of the tripartite agreement of November 9, 2020, which put an end to the 44-day War. Today’s action is one of numerous violations of the agreement that the Azerbaijani regime has committed to date, which also include the aggressive war of September 13 against the Republic of Armenia that killed over 200 Armenians, among them civilians, and resulted in the occupation of part of the sovereign territory of the Republic of Armenia. In addition, isolating Artsakh Armenians is a breach of international humanitarian law, international human rights law and, possibly,


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international criminal law. The genocidal intent of Baku has never been clearer and the actions carried out up to the moment highly predict this outcome.

Because the international community continues to choose to ignore the claims of Armenians for survival and self-determination in Artsakh, and because the media in general fails to portray a proper image of the conflict (if they cover the conflict at all), Aliyev is convinced of his invincibility. The combination of these factors, along with the geopolitics of the region and the European community’s engagement in gas-related business with the autocratic regime of Azerbaijan since the start of Russia’s war of aggression against Ukraine, creates the perfect environment for the Baku regime to freely pursue its genocidal goals and territorial ambitions.

The Lemkin Institute has issued several Red Flag Alerts and Statements regarding the threats of genocide to — and the Azerbaijani criminal actions against — Armenians in both Artsakh and Armenia proper. We reiterate that we strongly believe that the international community can prevent genocide in this case by putting coordinated diplomatic pressure on both the Aliyev regime in Azerbaijan and on its ally, the Erdogan regime in Turkey. The Western world must make it clear that it does not support genocide, lest it end up overseeing yet another catastrophe for the Armenian people. Western nations are at grave risk of facilitating genocide in this case and should not believe themselves to be beyond the reach of international criminal law.

Merry Christmas
& A VERY HAPPY NEW YEAR



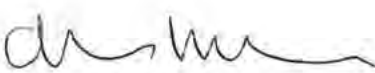
To Our Readers


The *Armenian Mirror-Spectator* is the first English-language Armenian weekly published in the US, and this year it celebrates 90 years of serving the community. Readers can learn of the most important developments in Armenia, as well as international politics, art and culture throughout the world in a convenient and concise format.

The *Mirror-Spectator* has covered the violence and political uncertainty affecting Armenia and Artsakh, supported efforts at humanitarian fundraising, and secured new young correspondents in Armenia, Artsakh and the US as well as two prominent political columnists from Armenia. We continue to provide periodic video reports online. Send us your email if you wish to regularly receive links to articles and videos.

We continue with our annual tradition of publishing your Christmas and New Year’s wishes, and greetings to relatives and friends in the final issue of the year. In case you wish to give gift subscriptions of the *Mirror-Spectator* for Christmas, for your convenience, we are placing a gift subscription form in the newspaper as well as one below.

Sincerely,


Alin K. Gregorian
Editor


Aram Arkun
Managing Editor

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