



Demonstrators near Capitol Hill ask for the opening of Lachin Corridor (Kenneth Martin photo)

Washington Protests Bring Attention to Lachin Blockade

By Kenneth Martin

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

WASHINGTON — Hundreds of demonstrators chanted “break the blockade!” on Capitol Hill this past week as Armenian Americans from around the nation gathered to push support for the Artsakh Republic (Nagorno-Karabakh) after the closing of the Lachin Corridor, the only access and egress between Artsakh and Armenia left under the terms of the ceasefire agreement of 2020 after the 44-Day War started by Azerbaijan’s invasion of Artsakh.

Members of the Eastern Region of the Armenian National Committee of America (ANCA) and other Armenians met with members of the House and Senate explaining the situation in Artsakh specifically and the immediate nature of the people’s condition and the need to

act before things get worse. They called on them to pass legislation cutting all aid to Azerbaijan to pressure its president, Ilham Aliyev, to lift the blockade. Much of the military aid has been used against Artsakh and Armenia during and after the 2020, 44 day



Rep. Adam Schiff addresses the crowd assembled for a demonstration in Washington (Kenneth Martin photo)

war and continues in the present.

On the second day of advocacy, February 2, more Armenian Americans arrived, calling on Congress to pass the bi-partisan resolution that had been introduced to the Congress

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Artsakh Foreign Ministry Issues Statement In Face of New Gas Cutoff

STEPANAKERT (Public Radio of Armenia/Azatutyun) — Artsakh’s Foreign Ministry has called on the international community to lead efforts to respond to and raise the alarm about the genocidal policy of Azerbaijan in light of the blockade of the Lachin Corridor.

The statement comes after Azerbaijan once again cut off the natural gas supply from Armenia to Artsakh through the only existing pipeline.

“During the 57 days of the

blockade, Azerbaijan cut off the gas supply to Artsakh as many as 6 times, in particular on December 13, 2022 for three days, on January 17, 2023 for one day, on January 18 for one day, on January 21 for four days, and on January 28 for one day, disrupting normal life in the republic and exerting psychological pressure on the people of Artsakh,” the Foreign Ministry said in a statement.

“As a result of Azerbaijan’s actions, 120,000 residents of the re-

public, including 30,000 children, continue to face serious difficulties with access to heating and hot water in conditions of severe transport blockade and cold winter. The situation is further aggravated by the acute shortage of electricity caused by a breakdown on January 9, of the only high-voltage power line coming from Armenia, which cannot be restored due to persistent obstruction by the Azerbaijani side,” the statement reads.

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More than 7,000 Have Died after Earthquakes Hammer Turkey And Syria

ISTANBUL (Combined Sources) — A powerful earthquake rocked southeastern Turkey and northern Syria early Monday, killing more than 7,000 people and injuring thousands more.

The 7.8 magnitude quake hit at 4:17 a.m. local time in Turkey’s Gaziantep province, the U.S. Geological Survey says.

Hundreds of families are still trapped, according to rescue workers. Turkey’s Interior Disaster Ministry says it has deployed over 9,600 search and rescue personnel to look for possible survivors. More than 2,800 buildings have collapsed, authorities said.

Citing Turkish authorities, the AP reports at least 2,316 people were killed in 10 provinces, and more than 13,000 were injured.



Emergency teams search in the rubble for people in a destroyed building in Adana, Turkey, on Monday. Khalil Hamra/AP

In Syria, at least 1,106 people have died, according to the AP. Syria’s Health Ministry says more than 650 people were killed in government-held areas, and about 1,400 are believed to have been injured. Groups in the rebel-held northwest say the death

toll is at least 450.

Among those who perished in Syria were four Armenians, including two members of the same family, Mirna Tenkejian, and her teenaged son, Alper Tenkejian, who died in the rubble of their

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Columbia U. Hosts Panel on ‘Preventing Second Armenian Genocide’

By Harry Kezelian

Mirror-Spectator Staff

NEW YORK — On Wednesday, February 1, more than 500 virtual attendees logged on to a panel on the ongoing Artsakh crisis, hosted by Columbia University’s Program on Peace-Building and Human Rights (PBHR), which is part of Columbia’s Institute for the Study of Human Rights.

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Sen. Chris Van Hollen



David Philipps



Van Krikorian



Ruben Vardanyan

YEREVAN

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Nelli Avetisyan Reinvents Medieval Armenian Soap-Making Traditions

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Marine Zuloian’s Works to Go on Exhibit in Seattle

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ARMENIA

NEWS from ARMENIA

Serzh Sargsyan Speaks About Foreign Policy During His Presidency

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) — Armenia's third president, Serzh Sargsyan, the current head of the Republican Party of Armenia (RPA), on February 6 delivered a lecture on the country's foreign policy and security architecture in 2008-2018 within the framework of the school of Civic Consciousness NGO.

In addition to students, the meeting was attended by experts and figures interested in Armenia's foreign policy.

During the meeting, which lasted about four hours, Sargsyan touched on the concept of Armenia's foreign policy during his presidency.

Afterwards, in accordance with the meeting agenda, he presented to the attendees efforts aimed at the development of Armenia's relations with neighboring states, Armenian-Russian allied relations, as well as Armenia-EU, Armenian-US relations. He also spoke about the Armenia-Turkey dialogue ("football" diplomacy).

Expansion of Zvartnots Airport Discussed

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — Minister of Economy Vahan Kerobyan and Corporación América President Eduardo Eurnekian met on February 6, to discuss the expansion of Zvartnots airport.

Kerobyan said on social media that the Argentinian-Armenian businessman and philanthropist's contribution to Armenia's economy is invaluable.

"During the meeting, we discussed the holding's new projects, including the expansion of Zvartnots airport, which will enable serving a much larger number of passengers and increase the number of flights and destinations," Kerobyan said.

ICRC Transports Seriously Ill Patients from Artsakh

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) — The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has facilitated the transfer of six more severely ill patients from Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh) to Armenia amid the ongoing Azerbaijani blockade, the Artsakh Ministry of Health reported.

The patients with serious oncological and cardiovascular diseases were transported to specialized medical centers in Armenia on February 7, the ministry said in a statement.

Planned surgeries remain suspended in Artsakh's hospitals due to the blockade of the Lachin Corridor, the only road connecting Artsakh to Armenia, which started back on December 12.

Ten children are in neonatal and intensive care in the Arevik Medical Center.

Nine patients, including three critically ill, remain in the intensive care unit of the Republican Medical Center.

The Red Cross has helped transfer a total of 76 patients from Artsakh to Armenia for urgent treatment since the start of the blockade.

Armenia Releases Map of Territories 'Seized by Azerbaijan' Since 2020

YEREVAN (OC Media) — Armenia has released a map claiming to show the territory seized by Azerbaijani forces during clashes since the 2020 Second Nagorno-Karabakh War.

The map was presented on February 6 during Armenia's bid for interim measures against Azerbaijan at the International Court of Justice (ICJ).

This is the first time either side has given details of the extent of territory that Azerbaijani forces have taken control of within Armenia since the 2020 war.

The map shows territory within Armenia's borders that the authorities claim to have lost during clashes in May and November 2021 and in September 2022. It includes swathes of land in southern and eastern Armenia.

In contrast to two previous major wars and sporadic fighting in and around the territory of Nagorno-Karabakh, the conflict that flared up between Azerbaijan and Armenia in 2021 took place along the Armenian-Azerbaijani border, with Azerbaijan encroaching into Armenian territory.

In September last year, the Azerbaijani army conducted a largescale incursion into Armenian provinces leaving hundreds dead. It was the deadliest escalation of the conflict since the 2020 Second Nagorno-Karabakh War.

Both Armenia and Azerbaijan are currently seeking provisional measures against each other from the 15-judge ICJ, based in the Hague. The ICJ is the main judicial body of the United Nations, and the forthcoming judgements have binding force for UN member states.

The hearings at the ICJ, held on 30 January upon Armenia's recent request for provisional measures, focused on the ongoing blockade of the Lachin Corridor. Armenia



requested that Azerbaijan be obliged to 'cease its orchestration and support of the alleged "protests" blocking [the Lachin Corridor]'.

Azerbaijan responded with a demand to force Armenia to contribute to demining in the Lachin Corridor and areas Azerbaijan took control of during the 2020 war, as well as to stop laying additional mines in Nagorno-Karabakh. The court heard Azerbaijan's appeal on Tuesday.

Since the Lachin Corridor was blocked by Azerbaijanis claiming to be 'eco-activ-

ists' over 7 weeks ago, Nagorno-Karabakh has been almost entirely cut off from Armenia and the rest of the world.

The latest hearing is part of a larger lawsuit at the Hague that Armenia filed against Azerbaijan in 2020, accusing the Azerbaijani government of racial discrimination against Armenians.

Azerbaijan submitted an almost identical countersuit, arguing that Armenia had violated the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination.

Artsakh Foreign Ministry Issues Statement In Face of New Gas Cutoff

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"Such actions by Azerbaijan clearly show that even after the signing of the Trilateral Statement of November 9, 2020, official Baku did not abandon its long-term policy of exterminating the people of Artsakh in their historical homeland. To achieve this goal, the Azerbaijani authorities have resorted to the blockade of Artsakh and disruption of the critical energy infrastructure, thereby creating unbearable living conditions and dooming the civilian population to incredible hardships," the Ministry stated.

"The inhumane actions of Azerbaijan indicate that the leadership of this country has placed itself above international law and human morality. Ignoring the calls of many countries and international organizations for the immediate lifting of the blockade of Artsakh and the decision of the European Court of Human Rights to ensure the free movement of people and cargo through the Lachin Corridor, official Baku has in fact placed itself in opposition to the civilized world. Such behavior became possible due to the impunity of the Baku regime, which gives it a free hand to further tighten its criminal policy against the indigenous Armenian population of Artsakh," it added.

"Under these circumstances, to prevent the destruction of the people of Artsakh, we consider it necessary that the international community direct their efforts not only toward ending the blockade of Artsakh, but also to taking prompt measures, including

activation of early warning mechanisms, adequate assessment and response to the genocidal policy of Azerbaijan," the Foreign Ministry concluded.

Azerbaijan reportedly again halted Armenia's natural gas supplies to Nagorno-Karabakh on February 6, nearly two months after effectively blocking the only road connecting the Armenian-populated region to the outside world.

Following the previous disruption reported on January 18, the authorities suspended classes in Karabakh's schools and colleges, saying that they cannot be heated in the absence of gas and electricity. The schools were reopened on January 30 after a partial restoration of the gas supply.

Armenia's electricity supplies to Karabakh were similarly blocked by Baku on January 10, leading to daily power cuts there. The local power grid operator says that its specialists have still not been allowed to repair an Azerbaijani-controlled section of the high-voltage transmission line supplying the electricity.

The energy crisis has compounded shortages of food, medicine and other essential items. Much of economic activity in Karabakh has also been disrupted. More than 5,000 of its estimated 120,000 residents have lost their jobs because of the blockade, according to the Karabakh government.

The government decided at the weekend to pay each of them 68,000 drams (\$170) in compensation. In addition, unemployed parents of children are to receive 40,000

drams per child.

"If only one of the parents doesn't work, then [the compensation will be worth] 20,000 drams," said Armen Mangasarian, the social security minister.

Azerbaijani government-backed protesters blocking the Lachin corridor allow only convoys of Russian peacekeepers and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to pass through it. The ICRC has evacuated critically ill patients from Karabakh and transported several dozen Karabakh children stranded in Armenia back to their families.

In recent days, the Russian peacekeepers appear to have shipped some foodstuffs from Armenia to Karabakh, somewhat alleviating the food shortages. Stepanakert residents say they can now buy limited amounts of some fruits and vegetables, sausage and confectionery in addition to sunflower oil, sugar, macaroni, rice and buckwheat rationed by the authorities.

Armenia has condemned the blockade as a gross violation of the Russian-brokered agreement that stopped the 2020 war in Karabakh.

Russia, the United States and the European Union have repeatedly urged Azerbaijan to reopen the corridor. US Secretary of State Antony Blinken telephoned Aliyev for that purpose late last month. Aliyev again defended the Azerbaijanis blocking the Lachin corridor and demanding that Baku be given access to "illegal" copper mines in Karabakh.



ARMENIA

Aurora Initiative Hosts Workshop at American University

YEREVAN, Armenia — On January 26, the Aurora Humanitarian Initiative, in conjunction with the “Scholae Mundi Armenia” Charity Foundation and the American University of Armenia (AUA), hosted a workshop that brought together students and alumni who are current and past recipients of the Aurora Scholarship, as well as representatives from various humanitarian organizations. The keynote speaker was 2022 Aurora Prize Laureate Jamila Afghani, an activist for women’s rights and education in Afghanistan and founder of the Noor Educational and Capacity Development Organization. In this challenging world, the need for leaders espousing and exemplifying humanitarian values is critical. As such, AUA is grateful for the ability to collaborate with its partners at the Aurora Humanitarian Initiative and Scholae Mundi in order to educate the next generation and inculcate in students these peace-building skills.

Dr. Vahram Ter-Matevosyan, assistant to the AUA President of Academic Affairs, opened the event by introducing the Aurora Humanitarian Initiative, a philanthropic vision of Vartan Gregorian, Noubar Afeyan, and Ruben Vardanyan. Through this initiative and on behalf of the survivors of the Armenian Genocide and in gratitude to their saviors, the descendants of the Genocide survivors have transformed their



Jamila Afghani speaks remotely.



Dr. Vahram Ter-Matevosyan

gratitude into action by supporting various educational initiatives, including student scholarships, grants to humanitarian projects, and promoting public awareness of humanitarian efforts.

Since 2017, in cooperation with Scholae Mundi Armenia, the Aurora Humanitarian Initiative has sponsored the Aurora Grat-

itude Scholarship, which enables students holding citizenship in Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt, Russia, Georgia, Artsakh, and Iran to study at AUA by either partially or fully covering the tuition fees. The Scholarship was established in order to promote humanitarian values, which play a paramount role in our increasingly globalized world and are critical for University students, who will take on leading positions in society in Armenia and neighboring countries. Since the inception of the scholarship, the Initiative has provided financial support to 69 students pursuing both bachelor’s as well as master’s degrees at AUA, 20 of whom are currently enrolled.

Next, Director of Humanitarian Programs at the Aurora Humanitarian Initiative Alexey Medvedev took the stage to highlight the primary activities realized by the organization: the annual \$1 million Aurora Prize for Awakening Humanity awarded to heroes who risk their own lives, health or freedom to save the lives, health or freedom of others suffering as a result of violent conflict, atrocity crimes or

other major human rights violations; over 300 projects in more than 50 countries, 46 of which have been designated by Aurora Prize Laureates; the Aurora Dialogues, a network of humanitarian heroes connected with policymakers; Aurora for Artsakh, launched following the 2020 Artsakh War and consisting of 94 projects supporting educational infrastructure, social development, and humanitarian aid; and Aurora Grants to support and preserve the Armenian legacy, disaster relief, and provide educational opportunities. “Throughout all our work, AUA has remained a steadfast and excellent partner of Aurora,” emphasized Medvedev.

The attendees then watched a video about Afghani’s work and joined a discussion with her via Zoom, during which she also fielded questions from the audience. “If I’m the only one who’s happy, I cannot be happy,” said Afghani in her opening remarks, referring to the 25 years of her life committed to fighting for the rights of women. When asked how she keeps her motivation in the face of difficulty, she replied, “Even if we are from a country with

lots of difficulties, it does not have to stop us from being good human beings.” She also emphasized her commitment to the next generation and desire to avoid placing the burden of solving today’s problems on tomorrow’s children.

Following the Zoom call, Zara Amatuni, Communication and Prevention Programs manager at the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), spoke on the topic of getting involved in humanitarian work, highlighting the variety of roles and responsibilities which individuals can undertake. Next, representatives from the organizations in attendance — the Foundation for Armenian Science and Technology, UWC Armenia National Committee, Tatoyan Foundation, Protection of Rights Without Borders NGO, International and Comparative Law Center Armenia, and Public Journalism Club — introduced their respective organizations, after which current Aurora Scholarship recipients were given time to network and mingle with these representatives in order to select the organization where they would like to complete their internship.

5,100 People Lost Their Jobs and Sources of Income in Artsakh amid Azeri Blockade

STEPANAKERT — The Artsakh government has provided updates on the situation in the country as the blockade imposed by Azerbaijan entered the 57th day on Monday, February 6.

According to the Artsakh Ministry of Health, 204 children were born in Artsakh maternity hospitals during the blockade. As a result of Azerbaijan’s ongoing blockade and campaign of terror against the population of Artsakh, newborns and their mothers face serious issues daily stemming from shortages of baby food, diapers, medicine, and other basic necessities.

The transfer of patients from Artsakh to Armenia continues to be carried out exclusively through the mediation of the International Committee of the Red Cross. As of February 5, a total of 70 patients have been transported from Artsakh to Armenia by the ICRC.

The State Revenue Committee of Artsakh reported that according to preliminary data, 1,902.3 million drams in tax revenues and duties were deposited into

the state budget of the Republic of Artsakh in the month of January 2023, which was 32.1 percent less than the projected amount of 2,800.0 million drams and 28.5 percent less than the amount collected during the same period last year.

The deficit is due to the economic issues resulting from the blockade of Artsakh by Azerbaijan since December 12, 2022, in particular, by the termination of the business activities and the corresponding absence of tax liabilities of a number of taxpayers.

Update of Daily Statistics

- 6 children are in the neonatal and intensive care units of the children’s hospital.
- 9 adult patients are in the intensive care unit, 4 of whom are in critical condition.
- 204 children have been born under the blockade.
- 580 people have been deprived of the opportunity to receive necessary medical treatment due to suspensions of planned surgeries in all medical facilities of Artsakh.

• As of now, 70 patients have been transferred from Artsakh to Armenia to receive appropriate medical care with the mediation and accompaniment of the International Committee of the Red Cross.

• At least 5,100 people have lost jobs and sources of income as a result of the impact on the economy.

• More than 22,400 tons of vital supplies, which would have been delivered during the period of the blockade, have not reached Artsakh. Only a meager amount has since been delivered by the ICRC and the Russian peacekeeping forces.

Key Facts

• For 57 days, the 120,000 people of Artsakh have been held hostage by a terrorist blockade carried out by agents of the Azerbaijani government.

• As a result of the blockade, the 120,000 people of Artsakh, including about 30,000 children, 20,000 elderly, and 9,000 people with disabilities, are suffering numerous hardships and face a high risk of malnutrition and frostbite, among other rights

violations.

• 41 kindergartens and 20 day schools have been closed since January 9 due to the worsening food shortage under the blockade.

• 5,528 children are no longer able to attend kindergarten and are being deprived of the opportunity to receive proper care and nutrition.

Since the beginning of the blockade, many countries and international organizations have condemned Azerbaijan’s actions and called for the lifting of the blockade. The issue was also discussed in the UN Security Council, the European Court of Human Rights obliged Azerbaijan to take all necessary and sufficient measures to end the blockade, and the issue will soon be discussed in the UN’s International Court of Justice (The Hague) within the proceedings of the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. The European Parliament adopted a resolution on the humanitarian consequences of the blockade of Artsakh.

INTERNATIONAL

INTERNATIONAL

‘Aurora’s Sunrise’ Wins Top MiradasDoc Prize

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) — The state-supported animated documentary, “Aurora’s Sunrise,” directed by Inna Sahakyan, won the Best International Film Award at the MiradasDoc Festival, Spain’s foremost documentary film festival, which ended on February 4.

Announcing the selection, the jury described the film as “a convincing story elegantly told, through archives, animation and fiction, about a little-known genocide that sheds light and awareness on today’s political tensions and challenges,” the National Cinema Center of Armenia reported on Monday, February 6, citing *Variety*.

A co-production of Armenia, Lithuania and Germany, “Aurora’s Sunrise” tells the story of Aurora Mardiganian, who survived the Armenian Genocide as a teenager, and later came to Hollywood where she starred in a 1919 silent film based on her account of the massacre.

This film was made possible with the academic contribution of the Zoryan Institute and is based on its Oral History Archive.

Turkish-Armenian Child Dies from Earthquake Injuries, Singer Missing

ISTANBUL (PanARMENIAN.Net, Panorama) — A Turkish-Armenian child in Malatya died at a hospital from injuries suffered in the devastating earthquake that hit Turkey on February 6, Armenpress reports.

The child’s parents were the two Turkish-Armenians who were killed in the earthquake. The child’s sibling is still hospitalized.

Zilan Tigris, an ethnic Armenian singer living in Diyarbakir (Tigranakert), and her husband Cagdas Cankaya are among those trapped in rubble after Monday’s powerful earthquake in Turkey, Akunq.net reported on February 7, citing a Facebook post of Udi Yervant, another Armenian musician from Diyarbakir.

The singer and her spouse have not yet been pulled out from the rubble, the source said.

Pashinyan Speaks with Syrian President, Offers Aid

YEREVAN (news.am) — Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan had a telephone conversation with the President of the Syrian Arab Republic Bashar Al-Assad, the press service of the Armenian government reported.

Pashinyan conveyed condolences to the President and people of Syria. Pashinyan wished a speedy recovery to all the injured and noted that Armenia is planning to support Syria.

Bashar al-Assad thanked him for the solidarity and noted that the primary issue facing them at the moment is related to food.

An agreement was reached that Armenia should send food and other types of aid to Syria as a priority.

Al-Assad thanked him for the assistance and expressed hope that with help it will be possible to overcome the severe consequences of the earthquake as quickly as possible.

The Challenge Of Hrant Dink’s Legacy

By Muriel Mirak-Weissbach

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

COLOGNE, Germany — A decade and a half after the assassination of Hrant Dink, the social and political injustice he fought against still reigns, not only in Turkey but also in Europe.

Xenophobic hatred and violence are being fomented by right-wing extremists, targeting newcomers, whether immigrants or refugees. Even among groups of newcomers, from Turkey, for example, there are right-wingers who have their own special targets — democratic Turks and Kurds, Armenians and increasingly, Jews. And in their homeland as well, minorities are under attack.

This was the subject of a discussion on January 21, moderated by Raffi Kantian, chairman of the German-Armenian Society (DAG), in the course of a meeting in Cologne, commemorating the anniversary of the death of Dink.

Joining the round table were Amke Dietert, Turkey expert from Amnesty International in Germany, Berivan Aymaz, Green Party politician and second vice-president of the State Legislature in North-Rhine Westphalia, and Banu Güven, a Turkish journalist and TV moderator, who has been working in Germany since 2016.

Remembering Hrant Dink

The *Agos* editor’s widow, Rakel Dink, welcomed the large gathering by a video hookup. She expressed the pain of his loss, even 16 years later, recalling how Hrant in his lifetime had continued to feel the pain of the 1915 genocide. Despite extremely critical conditions in Turkey today and the continuing aggression in Nagorno-Karabakh, the situation is “not without hope,” she said, and pointed to the courageous protest movement in Iran.

In his opening greetings, Bishop Serovpé Isakhanyan, Primate of the Armenian Apostolic Church in Germany, lamented the fact that, even 16 years later, the case of Dink’s death is still murky, and reconciliation based on justice remains distant. Reconciliation has been further undermined by the Nagorno-Karabakh war and its aftermath as well as by pervasive silence on the continuing crisis. In this connection Bishop Isakhanyan stressed the importance of “courageous voices,” like that of Hrant Dink, voices that speak out against injustice and fight for peace and reconciliation.



Rakel Dink (Klaus R. Müller, Creative Commons Lizenz)

Among others, journalist Can Dündar offered brief remarks, noting two dimensions to Hrant Dink’s death. On the personal level, Dink belonged to both Armenian and Turkish society, and his death brought the two social layers together. On the political level, the case again demonstrated the problem of the untouchable State.

The ‘Foreigners’

The round table discussion, titled, “From Exclusion to Violence: What We Can Do Against Hate and Rightwing Extremism,” considered current events in Germany and Europe, but also in Turkey, where Istanbul mayor Ekrem Imamoglu and cultural patron Osman Kavala and their associates are facing political persecution,

despite intervention by the European Court of Human Rights.

When acts of violence against foreigners occur in Germany, one often hears complaints about the “failure of integration,” a cliché implying that newcomers don’t want to be integrated — without considering whether or not it might be the integration programs that are at fault. Similarly, when a suspect is arrested for a violent act, often the first question raised in the media is the person’s ethnic identity: what is his first name?

Aymaz dubbed this pure populism, pointing out that in many cases, like the 2020 racist shooting of nine victims in Hanau, the assailants are native-born Germans. By the same token, Kantian added, there are the xenophobic foreigners, the most notorious being the Turkish terrorist organization Grey Wolves. In 2018, the Bundestag (Parliament) debated its status, and passed a resolution which, however, was watered down out of foreign policy considerations. France has forbidden the group; for Aymaz, the Grey Wolves, be-



Bishop Serovpé Isakhanyan (Photos: Klaus R. Müller, Creative Commons Lizenz)



From left, Amke Dietert, Raffi Kantian and Berivan Aymaz (Klaus R. Müller, Creative Commons Lizenz Photo)

ing the biggest extremist, racist organization in Germany, one that targets Kurds, Armenians, and Jews, can’t be allowed. The “fight against racism has priority over foreign policy issues.”

This fight, she continued, depends on resistance outside parliament, on the power of civil society. The same, Kantian noted, goes for Turkey. In this connection, attention turned to the case of Anadolu Kültür founder Osman Kavala, the reasons for his detention, and the prospects for his release. Contrary to accusations that he was behind an attempt to overthrow the government, it was his commitment to cultural pluralism that was considered a crime. Is civil society in Turkey strong enough today to mobilize, as it did following Dink’s death, when the slogan was “We are all Armenians”? For Anke Dietert, this spirit is still alive, but it faces tremendous opposition in Turkey’s nationalist, anti-minorities policy, as well as state control of the media.

Can the upcoming elections lead to change? The fact that elections take place is itself positive, but whether they will be free and fair is an open question. Participants reported on the extreme polarization inside Turkey, as well as waning support for the ruling parties due to the economic crisis, also reflected in close poll results. At the same time, repression of any political opposition and financial constraints are hurting the opposition parties. Güven expressed concerns that this repression would increase even further, blocking funds for opposition parties. Aymaz pointed to the importance of Turkish voters living in Germany, a huge block amounting to 1.4 million people, among them ultranationalists crucial to the AKP and MHP.



Can Dündar (Klaus R. Müller, Creative Commons Lizenz Photo)



INTERNATIONAL

Earthquakes Hammer Turkey And Syria

QUAKE, from page 1

apartment building in the Armenian-populated town of Aziziye.

Alber Tenekejian was a student of the AGBU Lazar Najarian-Calouste Gulbanki-



Alber Tenekjian, left, and his mother, Mirna Tenekjian, died in Syria.

an College of Aleppo, and a member of the basketball team.

In addition, four Armenians are reportedly dead in Aleppo and two in Turkey. Many Armenian churches and educational centers have been damaged.

The two Turkish-Armenian victims, a husband and wife, died when their apartment in Malatya collapsed in the earthquake.

In Syria, the damage seems to be worse. The Holy Forty Martyrs Armenian Church in Iskenderun was completely destroyed.

The epicenter of the 7.8-magnitude quake was 23 kilometers (14.2 miles) east of Nurdagi, in Turkey's Gaziantep province, at a depth of 24.1 kilometers (14.9 miles), the United States Geological Survey (USGS) said.

Around nine hours later, a major aftershock that measured 7.5 in magnitude struck in Turkey, according to the USGS. That shock hit around 95 kilometers (59 miles) north of the original quake.

Rescue efforts were complicated on Monday by a series of aftershocks: At least

55 earthquakes of magnitude 4.3 or greater have struck near Turkey's Syrian border in the past 24 hours, according to the U.S. Geological Survey.

The first quake was the largest: a 7.8 magnitude temblor that hit at 4:17 a.m. local time. Since then, at least 15 of the quakes have been magnitude 5.0 or greater, and two have been at 6.0 or more, the USGS says.

The powerful aftershocks have unleashed danger and panic on the public — as epitomized by a TV news crew that documented the moment yet another strong quake forced people to flee, hoping to escape dangers posed by collapsing buildings and the shaking ground.

Some tried to escape in their cars, which jammed the roads and made it even harder for emergency services to reach the wounded. In Turkey, mosques opened as shelters for those who can't go home.

The country had been bracing for a snowstorm, with Turkish Airlines canceling more than 200 flights for Sunday and Monday because of expected conditions. In nearby Greece, heavy snowfall shut down schools, shops and many in-person businesses and public services in Athens on Monday.

The earthquake in northern Syria hit parts of the country that have been already been devastated by more than a decade of civil war.

Millions of Syrians who fled fighting live in refugee camps or basic tented settlements established amid the olive groves that run along the border with Turkey.

The Union of Medical Care and Relief Organizations (UOSSM), an organization that provides health care in rebel-held areas of northwest Syria, said "so far our hospitals in northwest Syria have received 91 dead and treated more than 500 severely injured victims of the earthquake."

Four of hospitals were damaged and evacuated, the organization said.

The United Nations monitoring body, the

OCHA, says of the population of 4.6 million people in northwest Syria, some 4.1 million people are in need of humanitarian aid. More than 3 million residents of the area are food insecure.

World leaders send aid and condolences

More than 40 world leaders offered aid and assistance, according to Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

President Biden issued a message saying he was "deeply saddened by the loss of life and devastation" in Turkey and Syria. Biden said in a tweet that he has directed his administration to monitor the situation closely, to coordinate with Turkish officials and to "provide any and all needed assistance."

The U.S. aid response "is already underway" in Turkey, Secretary of State Antony Blinken said in a statement issued by the State Department. And in Syria, he added, humanitarian groups that are supported by the U.S. are also responding to the earthquake emergency there.

The U.S. response will include USAID — the U.S. Agency for International Development — and other federal agencies, national security adviser Jake Sullivan said earlier Monday.

The United Nations General Assembly held a minute of silence for the more than 2,300 victims of the earthquakes in Syria and Turkey during its 58th meeting this morning.

NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg also announced Monday that NATO allies would mobilize to help Turkey. Relations between the alliance and Turkey remained tense after Turkish President Erdogan blocked bids by Sweden and Finland to join the alliance in May.

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) said hundreds of staff and volunteers with the Turkish Red Crescent are supporting people on the ground with mobile kitchens, catering vehicles, tents and blankets.

Monday's earthquake was one of the country's worst disasters in decades. The size and scope of the seismic activity makes it roughly the equivalent of a 1999 earthquake that hit Turkey, one of the deadliest quakes in history that killed more than 17,000 people.

Among the damaged structures right now is a 2,000-year-old castle in southeastern Turkey, according to state and local reports.

Gaziantep Castle — located in the heart of the city closest to the quake's epicenter — had previously withstood multiple invasions, renovations and regime changes.

Armenia offered to provide urgent aid to Turkey and Syria after the two countries were hit by a powerful earthquake early on Monday.

"Saddened by the news of the devastating earthquake in Turkey and Syria that resulted in the loss of so many lives," tweeted Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan. "Our deepest condolences to the families of the victims and we wish a speedy recovery to the injured."

"Armenia is ready to provide assistance," he wrote.

Pashinyan did not specify whether the Armenian government is ready to send relief aid and/or search-and-rescue teams. The government made no statements to that effect immediately after his tweet.

(Stories from NPR and The Armenian Report were used to compile this report.)

Macron, Pashinyan Discuss Azeri Blockade Of Karabakh

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan again discussed with French President Emmanuel Macron Azerbaijan's continuing blockade of the Lachin corridor in a phone call on February 6.

Pashinyan's press office said he briefed Macron on the "dire humanitarian situation" in Nagorno-Karabakh caused by the nearly two-month blockade.

"Emmanuel Macron emphasized the importance of the uninterrupted operation of the Lachine Corridor and indicated France's readiness to continue contributing to the solution of this problem," it added in a statement.

France's presidential Elysee Palace did not immediately issue a statement on the conversation.

Macron urged Baku to "allow free movement along the Lachin corridor" when he phoned his Azerbaijani counterpart Ilham Aliyev on December 23. According to the French readout of the call, Aliyev expressed his "intention" to do so.

However, government-backed Azerbaijani protesters have since continued to block Karabakh's land link with Armenia on ostensibly environmental grounds. Aliyev and other Azerbaijani officials have endorsed their actions.

Later in December, the leaders of France's mainstream opposition parties said Paris should establish a "humanitarian presence" in Karabakh and seek Western economic and political sanctions against Azerbaijan.

French parliament speaker Yael Braun-Pivet, who is affiliated with Macron's LREM party, expressed serious concern about the Azerbaijani blockade during a January 12-13 visit to Armenia. But she spoke out against unilateral French sanctions, saying that the possibilities of dialogue with Baku have still not been exhausted.

The European Union's foreign policy chief, Josep Borrell, made it clear last week that the EU is not considering imposing sanctions on Azerbaijan because of the blockade.

Germany Urges 'Immediate' End to Karabakh Blockade

BERLIN (AFP) — German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock on Tuesday called for a reopening of a key corridor to the disputed Nagorno-Karabakh region, after talks with her Armenian counterpart.

Baerbock, whose country leads a European Union mission in the region, told reporters that the escalating humanitarian situation made it essential that "the blockade end immediately."

"The supermarket shelves are almost empty, medication is lacking... family members are stuck in Armenia and can't get back to their loved ones, schoolchildren have to freeze in these icy temperatures because the energy supplies are cut off," Baerbock said.

Since mid-December, a group of Azerbaijanis has been blocking the only road into Karabakh from Armenia to protest what they claim is illegal mining causing environmental damage.

As a result, the mountainous region of some 120,000 people has been running short of food, medicines and fuel.

Armenia has repeatedly accused Russia, a powerbroker between the ex-Soviet republics, of standing in the way of ending a



German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock

"humanitarian crisis."

The EU set up a temporary monitoring mission last October along the Armenian side of the border with Azerbaijan aimed at restoring peace and security in the area and building confidence between the two sides.

Baerbock said after talks with Armenian

Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan that the mission aimed to ensure "more stability and above all trust" in the volatile region.

This includes establishing emergency hotlines between national and local authorities.

"We have in recent years been forced to see that any little spark can lead to a fire in the area — reliable communication channels lessen this risk," Baerbock said.

She said Germany as head of the mission would coordinate with local police and civilian experts.

When the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, ethnic Armenian separatists in Karabakh broke away from Azerbaijan. The ensuing conflict claimed around 30,000 lives.

Another flare-up in violence in 2020 cost more than 6,500 lives and ended with a Russian-brokered truce that saw Armenia cede territories it had controlled for decades.

Baerbock noted the "enormous human suffering" caused by 30 years of conflict in the region.

"We have no illusions -- there can be no solution overnight," she said.



Community News

18th Annual Times Square Commemoration To Take Place on April 23

NEW YORK — The 108th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide will take place in Times Square, on Sunday, April 23, 2023, from 1:30 to 4 p.m., in an event hosted by the Knights and Daughters of Vartan. Thousands of people from around the country will come together in unity to honor the victims of the Armenian Genocide, secure global recognition, and champion human rights.

Noted politicians, academics, and artists will participate in the meaningful program that will commemorate the first genocide of the 20th century that claimed the lives of 1.5 million Armenian martyrs. The Armenian Diaspora will continue its vigorous efforts to remember, to honor, and to educate the world about this devastating chapter in world history that continues to be denied today by the Turkish government.

“We thank the City of New York for providing our community with the space to host our annual Armenian Genocide Commemoration in Times Square for the past 38 years,” said Co-Chairs Haig Gulian and Christopher Artun. “It is an honor to be part of such a monumental event that has taken place for almost four decades at the Crossroads of the World.”

In conjunction with the Times Square Commemoration, the Knights and Daughters of Vartan will sponsor its annual global student essay contest, that gives Armenian youth the opportunity to express their voices and concerns regarding genocide awareness and human rights.

The annual Armenian Genocide Commemoration in Times Square is



The commemoration in Times Square in 2022

sponsored by the Knights of Vartan and Daughters of Vartan, a national fraternal organization, and co-sponsored by the Armenian General Benevolent Union, Armenian Assembly of America, Armenian National Committee of America, Armenian Democratic Liberal Party, Armenian Bar Association, and the Armenian Missionary Association of America; participating organizations include the Diocese of the Armenian Church, Prelacy of the Armenian Church, Armenian Presbyterian Church, Armenian Evangelical Union, Armenian Catholic Eparchy, Homenetmen Scouts of NY & NJ, Armenian Youth Federation, and several national Armenian youth organizations.



A set of different soaps

Nelli Avetisyan Reinvents Medieval Armenian Soap-Making Traditions

By Ani Duzdabanyan
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

LOS ANGELES — When I met Nelli Avetisyan for the first time, my hands were covered with blisters and cracks while I was navigating the endless cycle of washing my toddler’s hands, frantically eliminating the bacteria and dust that she could get while crawling. Nelli examined my damaged fingers, which looked even worse because of scratching, and handed me a cream-colored soap with a carved picture of a goat on it. “It’s a Bezoar goat,” she specified. Catching my puzzled look, she added, “It is good for your hands. Just apply it on them and leave it for half an hour, after which you can wash your hands.”

My impromptu “appointment” led me to the journey that Nelli Avetisyan went through which ended with her relocating to the US and turning Avetisyan Artisan Soaps into a permanent business.

It all started with the concern that increased in Nelli, a pharmacist professor at the Yerevan State Medical University and later at Yerevan State University, about finding chemicals in the water, including traces of medications. “In Armenia, the process of the use of medication is poorly executed. The doctors prescribe it, the pharmacists sell, and the patients use as much as needed or even wanted.

But what happens to the rest of the medication that sits in the drawer or expires? No one bears responsibility for that. There are medications that do not disintegrate in thirty years and stay in the water until it reaches the fields of crops absorbing into the soil,” she explains. Nelli found out that fish farming also uses hormones.

“All the sewage from the hospitals fall into the river Hrazdan. That river nurtures the entire Ararat valley. Besides, all the fishponds are located on both sides of the river. The farmers use a lot of hormones that go into the same river. No one thinks about it,” exclaimed Nelli.

In the early 2000s, for seven consecutive years, Nelli did her own research, testing the water by utilizing private labs and her own resources. “I found out that the fishmongers often had fish with two heads, which they carefully cut off and served

see SOAP, page 10



Bezoar goat soap

Beverly Hills Mayor Denounces Hateful Flyers Aimed at Armenians

By Michele McPhee

LOS ANGELES (*LA Magazine*) — A slew of hate-filled flyers aimed at pro-Armenia demonstrators sprouted up the weekend of January 28-29 around Beverly Hills, where protestors had gathered to march against the ongoing crisis in Artsakh, the heavily Armenia-populated province in the southern Caucasus whose residents have been cut off from food and supplies by Azerbaijani troops.

The demonstrators were greeted by flyers taped to lamp poles that threatened: “Azerbaijan; Turkey; Pakistan; Israel = 4 BROTHERS WILL WIPE Armenia OFF the MAP Inshallah!!!”

Beverly Hills Mayor Lille Bosse immediately denounced the flyers on social media as the city’s police department reviewed surveillance camera footage around La Cienega and Wilshire Boulevards in search of those responsible.



Beverly Hills Mayor Lille Bosse

“I’ve said it over and over again, hate has no place in Beverly Hills or anywhere. I will always stand up, I will always speak out against it,” Bosse wrote in a statement posted to Facebook.

The war in Ukraine has been the focus of the international community as the Armenia-Azerbaijan showdown unfolds in another corner of Europe — Nagorno-Karabakh, a contested territory in Azerbaijan that is home to around 120,000 Armenian residents.

In 2020, following a six-week war that left thousands dead, Russian President Vladimir Putin installed peace-keeping troops along the Lachin corridor, connecting Armenians to medicines, food, and “living a normal life,” says Harut Sassounian, an Armenian-American columnist and editor of the *California Courier*.

“Genocide is not only the mass killing of people, but the definition is also about creating conditions of life that lead to the killing of people, by starving them, depriving them of medicine, cutting off the heat and electricity in the mountains where it is below zero,” he writes.

Putin’s attention has turned to Ukraine, but tensions in the region have bubbled up again over a blockade by Azerbaijani activists that has left Armenians cut off from everyday necessities. *The New York Times*, see HATE, page 8

COMMUNITY NEWS

Erik Bazinyan Edges Alantez Fox Via Majority Decision

By Anson Wainwright

MONTREAL (Ringtv.com) — Super middleweight contender Erik Bazinyan retained his North American Boxing Federation (NABF) title by edging past Alantez Fox via 10-round majority decision at Montreal Casino, Montreal, on Thursday night, February 2.

In the early going, Fox’s height and reach were troublesome for Bazinyan, who entered the fight as The Ring’s No. 7 super middleweight. The defending regional beltholder had success when he forced the taller American to the ropes.

Bazinyan and his corner realized he couldn’t stay on the outside and try to match jabs with Fox and looked to press the action. He found a home over the next couple of rounds with a steady diet of overhand rights.

By the middle rounds, things appeared to be close on the scorecards. Fox had the advantage in the sixth round but Bazinyan rebounded in the seventh as the aggressor and landed a handful of right hands.

Fox wouldn’t let Bazinyan have it all his own way and continued to make things difficult. The 27-year-old Canadian resident wouldn’t be denied and claimed the eight and ninth by force of will.

Bazinyan came out strong in the 10th and final round, firing off several shots in an effort to get Fox out of there. The attack forced Fox to initially cover up. Both men exchanged punches in a firefight that had the crowd on their feet, cheering Bazinyan’s name.

When the decision were announced, both fighters drew on the first scorecard, at 95-95, but the other two judges scored the bout a little wider at 98-92 for Bazinyan.

With the win, Bazinyan moved to 29-0, 21 knockouts, and Fox saw his record dip to 28-4-1, 13 KOs.



Erik Bazinyan, right, vs. Alantez Fox (photo Vincent Ethier/Eye of the Tiger Management)

AMAA Child and Orphan Care Luncheon and Children’s Fashion Show March 4

By Eileen Keusseyan

LOS ANGELES — The Armenian Missionary Association of America (AMAA) Child and Orphan Care Luncheon and Fashion Show are celebrating 30 years of caring for children and their families in Armenia, Artsakh, Lebanon, and Syria. The nationwide AMAA Board of Directors of the will be attending, alongside West Coast chairs Lori Muncherian and Arsine Phillips.

This year’s luncheon, schedule to take place in Beverly Hills Hotel on March 4,

is co-chaired by Lisa Karamardian, Nicole Nishanian and Leslie Shahinian.

The fashion show chairs are Jacqueline Geragos and Ariana Dermendjian and this year, for the first time ever, we will be partnering with and featuring the most adorable fashions from Saks Fifth Avenue, Beverly Hills. It is going to be the most fashionable show ever.

The silent auction committee, led once again by Sandy McNutt and assisted by Hourii Kassabian, has procured some of the most beautiful items and adventurous experiences.

And once again, there will be special gift backs for everyone to take home, donated exclusively by KimKris Beauty (kimkrisbeauty.com).

To date, donations have helped to facilitate the sponsorship of nearly 2,000 children, support four kindergartens in Armenia and Artsakh, support of five Shogh community-based educational day centers in Yerevan, Vanadzor, Gyumri, Askeran and Shushi, provide summer and day camp experiences for nearly 5000 children and youth, provide Christmas programs at 42 locations, including gift packages for

12,000 children, offer various art, sports, theater and tutoring classes for 1,500 children, and assist needy families with relief packages and provide medical and dental care to over 6,000 children.

AMAA’s James G. Jameson Essay Contest Open To High School, College Students

PARAMUS, N.J. — The James G. Jameson Essay Contest, sponsored by the Armenian Missionary Association of America (AMAA), runs every academic year and is financed from the income of a special fund established by Mr. and Mrs. James G. Jameson of Brookline, Mass.

All Armenian and part-Armenian high school and college students attending schools in North America are eligible. Only unpublished essays are accepted which are written in English and have a length of 1,000 to 2,000 words.

The topics of the contest are required to touch upon some aspect of Armenian heritage and experience, such as religion, history, culture, literature, language, art, architecture, geography and economics.

Essays are judged based on merit in such criteria as content, style, logic and reasoning, coherence and usage.

Awards for the Contest are made in two categories: College/University contestants, and High School contestants..

The deadline for entries is May 1, 2023.

Entries and/or inquiries should be directed to: James G. Jameson Essay Contest, c/o Armenian Missionary Association of America, 31 West Century Road, Paramus, NJ 07652 or e-mailed to lucyr@amaa.org.

New Armenian Language Council Holds Its Inaugural Meeting

NEW YORK — The Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church of America’s newly formed “Armenian Language Council” held its inaugural online meeting in mid-January, led by Primate Fr. Mesrop Parsamyan, with interim Director of Ministries Fr. Hratch Sargsyan.

The group discussed challenges facing parish Armenian language programs, including the disruptions caused by the pandemic, and the need to train teachers in Armenian language instruction—an undertaking that the Diocese pioneered in past times. An idea that emerged from the meeting was to explore modeling Armenian instruction on the ESL (English as a Second Language) programs that proliferate in every locality.

As a first step, the Armenian Language Council will survey existing parish Armenian schools to understand their current situations. Another immediate task is to form a committee of professionals to help with matters of curriculum, and help guide local parish educators in the best use of the Diocese’s extensive existing resources, which have been successfully deployed in the past.

During the virtual meeting, council members, Fr. Sargsyan, and the Primate spoke honestly about potentialities and aims of parish Armenian education programs. “We want our children to be raised as proud Armenians, who love Armenian language,



know our history, and take strength from our rich cultural and religious heritage,” said Fr. Mesrop.

The Armenian Language Council will hold regular meetings in the coming months. Its membership includes Nayiri Balaian (Holy Trinity Church, Cheltenham, PA), Anna Ghasabyan (Holy Marys Church, Bayside, NY), Yn. Naira Azatyan-Sargsyan (St. Gregory of Narek Church, Cleveland, OH), Anahit Toumanjan (St. John Church, Southfield, MI), and Maral Terzian Aznavour (St. Sarkis Church, Dallas, TX).

COMMUNITY NEWS

Ermonian Hall at Hye Pointe Apostolic Church Dedicated

HAVERHILL, Mass. — On Sunday, December 4, 2022, by the blessing of Primate of the Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church of America, Very Rev. Mesrop Parsamyan, Fr. Vart Gyozyan, pastor of the Armenian Apostolic Church at Hye Pointe, conducted a dedication service for the newly named Krikor Ermonian Hall with more than 100 people present. The hall, part of the Armenian Apostolic Church at Hye Pointe's Family Life and Cultural Center, has been used over the past 5 years to conduct Holy Badarak weekly. This was the first opportunity to dedicate the hall due to COVID 19.

The hall, named after Krikor Ermonian, represents the single largest bequest Hye Pointe has received during its building project. Hye Pointe is the first merged parish in the Diocese, and has been steadily moving forward towards the completion of its sanctuary, despite the recent COVID-19 pandemic. The gift, in excess of \$1.5 million dollars, was directed to Hye Pointe by Ermonian's relatives, Jack and Audrey Pilibosian.

Krikor Ermonian was born in Worcester and was the son of Simon and Satenig (Yeghiayan) Ermonian. He and his brother Mitchell grew up in a traditional Armenian family, valuing hard work and education. Krikor attended public school in Arlington, and the University of Massachusetts-Amherst, receiving a degree in Civil and Environmental Engineering.

Krikor was one of the "Greatest Generation," serving at both the European and Pacific fronts of World War II. A beneficiary of the G.I. Bill, Ermonian was at Fort Devens in Shirley, Massachusetts, before



enrolling at UMass Amherst and subsequently earning his degree in Civil and Environmental Engineering in 1952.

After graduation, Ermonian joined the Army Corps of Engineers. Following a brief assignment in the Construction Division, where he worked on the construction of Westover Air Base, he enrolled in the engineering trainee unit and subsequently assumed a position in the Engineering Division in 1954, where he spent the remainder of his Army Corps career. He dedicated his career to designing flood control structures throughout New England. His reward was the satisfaction of seeing these projects provide flood protection to the populace of New England. He retired from his career as a federal civil engineer.

Ermonian never married, but continued to live on the second floor of a two-family home in Arlington, which had been originally purchased by his parents. He believed in the importance of education, which explains his generous gifts for student scholarships at University of Massachusetts-Amherst and Arlington High School. Always continuing to learn, he was a history buff and completed more than 100 courses at Harvard University Division of Continuing Education. He also spent many

hours at various libraries and was a benefactor of the Armenian Church Endowment Fund. He had a keen mathematical mind, invested wisely, and had contributed well over a million dollars to various causes. As many people commented, Ermonian was a very humble man. He did not drive but took the MBTA or walked. He left a bequest to UMass Amherst and 22 other charities, including the Armenian Apostolic Church at Hye Pointe. His donation enabled Hye Pointe to complete the exterior shell of its sanctuary, create an endowment, and provide operational support.

Krikor's cousin and executor of his estate, Jacob (Jack) Pilibosian and his wife Audrey, felt that the work at Hye Pointe would have excited Krikor. His interest in education, design, conservation, and fulfillment of the Armenian Church are reflected at Hye Pointe. Parishioners of Hye Pointe are eternally grateful in the generous contribution to the Hye Pointe community.

The Armenian Apostolic Church at Hye Pointe, after a brief pause due to COVID 19, has begun its campaign to complete the sanctuary (internal) for consecration. With a grant of \$125,000, exterior and interior security is underway, as well as other aspects of internal infrastructure (HVAC and electrical). Naming opportunities are available and for more information, check the Church's website page, <https://www.hypointearmenianchurch.org/>.

Beverly Hills Mayor Denounces Hateful Flyers Aimed at Armenians

HATE, from page 6

citing a local reporter inside the region, writes that the only items left on supermarket shelves are alcohol and candy.

The International Crisis Group, a non-profit conflict watchdog, warns that the showdown may become as intractable and bloody as the war in Ukraine.

"The Russian peacekeepers are supposed to intervene to prevent this sort of blockade, but they allowed them to come in an area that they don't belong," Sassounian says. "Many Armenians who have settled in this area are from that region... they feel very personally involved in this conflict."

Chairman of the Armenian Rights Watch Committee of the Armenian Bar Association Alex Bastian says that hate crimes against his countrymen are not only on the rise but have also gone largely unnoticed by the international community. St. Gregory's Armenian church in San Francisco, where he was baptized, was hit by a firebomb in 2020; the attack remains unsolved. The FBI has offered a \$50,000 reward for information about those responsible.

"It's not just a crime against one of us,

it's a crime against all of us," Bastian said of the flyers. He knows firsthand how violent words can escalate quickly into violent actions, such as the burning of a church or bullets fired at an Armenian school.

In Beverly Hills, Armenians are just the latest to be targeted by hateful flyers. Anti-Semitic flyers posted around the city made national headlines when they repeatedly appeared around the city in late 2022.

The weekend's threats against Armenian-Americans were also denounced by Sepi Shyne, the mayor of West Hollywood, a city home to a sizable community of Armenian Americans.

"The rise in hate is indicative of a serious threat to democracy and we must all continue to stand for love and against hate," Shyne wrote in a recently tweeted.

That message was reinforced at the Vatican Sunday by Pope Francis, who recognized "the grave humanitarian situation in the Lachin Corridor," during his mass in Saint Peter's Square. "I am close to all those who, in the dead of winter, are forced to cope with these inhumane conditions."

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.

We apologize and ask for your continued understanding.

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COMMUNITY NEWS

Columbia U. Hosts Panel on ‘Preventing Second Armenian Genocide’

PANEL, from page 1

David L. Phillips, the director of PBHR, is a political and human rights expert who has worked with numerous independent and university-based human rights initiatives, notably the Elie Wiesel Foundation for Humanity. He has also held positions as a senior advisor and foreign affairs expert for the US State Department under the Clinton, Bush, and Obama administrations. Human rights in the Middle East is one of his areas of expertise and in recent years he has focused on the relations between Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Turkey; as well as the Taliban rule in Afghanistan.

Phillips acted as moderator of the panel which included State Minister of the Republic of Artsakh Ruben Vardanyan, and the co-chairman of the Armenian Assembly of America, Van Z. Krikorian. US Sen. Chris Van Hollen (D-Maryland), also offered introductory remarks expressing solidarity with the people of Artsakh.

Preventing a Second Armenian Genocide

The phrase “Second Armenian Genocide” has been encouraged by Phillips and others in order to gain the attention of the international community and to make the gravity of the situation understood. The purpose of the webinar was stated as to discuss practical suggestions of what can be done.

Although the practical solutions were perhaps a smaller segment of the discussion than some may have hoped, the panel gave an excellent summary of the situation on the ground in Artsakh (from Vardanyan) and the clear evidence of genocidal intent by the Azeri regime (from Krikorian). A question and answer session followed the main speakers, and Phillips moderated the questions as well as stressed some of the possible practical solutions. Overall, the speakers placed the crisis in the broader human rights context and gave background to the current situation tailored for a Western (particularly American), non-Armenian audience.

Van Hollen opened the discussion with remarks expressing his solidarity with the people of Artsakh. Calling it “the latest chapter in Azerbaijan’s aggression against Nagorno-Karabakh,” he likened the situation to Vladimir Putin’s invasion of Ukraine and called attention to the plight of children, the elderly, and the disabled. Referring to Aliyev’s “malign actions,” he called upon the Biden administration to work toward peace and mentioned that the US State Department called for “dialogue” last week. However, according to Van Hollen, the US needs to do more — it needs to be prepared to take action to hold Azerbaijan accountable for its aggression. Van Hollen thanked Columbia University for hosting the discussion and stated that he “looked forward” to working together on behalf of human rights.

The floor returned to Phillips, who gave a brief synopsis of the history of the conflict, beginning with the war of the early 1990s and the first ceasefire in 1994. Phillips stated that the blockade is in flagrant violation of the terms of the 2020 trilateral ceasefire between Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Russia, and also in violation of international law.

Phillips described the current crisis as a “systematic attempt by Azerbaijan to make Artsakh unlivable and to drive Armenians from their lands, which constitutes a second Armenian Genocide. He noted that Azerbaijan did not act alone but that the Republic of Turkey acted “in concert with their Turkic brethren,” pointing out that Turkey’s President Erdogan has vowed that “Nagorno-Karabakh will be returned to Azerbaijan,” and “we will support Azerbaijan to the end.”

Summing up that the 2020 ceasefire was mediated by Russia, yet the recent blockade (which Russia has not put a stop to) has set

back prospects for peace, Phillips stressed that “we know from experience the importance of US engagement,” before introducing the main speakers, Ruben Vardanyan and Van Krikorian.

Vardanyan Reports Situation on Ground

Vardanyan, who joined the talk virtually from Artsakh, began by reminding the audience that the Artsakh struggle did not begin with the fall of the Soviet Union, but dates back at least to February 1988, when the movement in support of Nagorno-Karabakh’s unification with Soviet Armenia began.

After 2020, he said, “we are in a new reality, surrounded by the Azerbaijani state,” culminating in the blockade of the Lachin Corridor which began on December 12. The corridor, which is Artsakh’s only access point to Armenia and to the outside world, was blocked by protesters who claim to care about “mining” but are really hired by the Azerbaijani government, which has been confirmed by US journalists. Between the “protestors” and the Azerbaijani Army, there is pressure being created for the Russian peacekeepers who are stuck in the middle.

According to Vardanyan, the only access now to the outside world is through the Russian peacekeepers and the Red Cross. There are a couple of hundred kids and a couple of thousand adults that are stuck outside Artsakh, in Armenia, who were not able to return home. Although the Artsakh government was able to get a group of kids returned so they could spend time with their families, the youngsters were stopped at a checkpoint by the Azerbaijani military and subjected to a “psychological attack” according to Vardanyan, resulting in traumatic experience that deeply disturbed these children.

Vardanyan also mentioned other issues, such as the natives of Artsakh who died outside the territory and whose bodies could not be brought in for burial. Electricity and natural gas, both of which come from Armenia but pass through Azerbaijan, are cut off from time to time by the latter. Due to this, Vardanyan says, the schools have been mostly closed. He focused on children’s rights in much of his speech, referring to Azerbaijan violating children’s “right to an education” and even the “right to have a normal life.”

Though the people of Artsakh are not yet starving since they have a minimal amount of food and medicine brought in by the Red Cross and the Russian peacekeepers, “it’s all under not normal conditions,” he said. The blockade has caused much more serious, and deeper problems, such as difficulties posed for agriculture, he added.

Vardanyan sees hope in the people of Artsakh. “I am amazed by the people who live here, despite all the difficulties. They continue to stay very strong,” in their determination to hold onto the right to stay in their homeland, he stated. He also expressed his feeling that “people feel more connected to each other, they feel more emotionally engaged with each other because of the situation.”

Vardanyan also expressed gratitude for the support Artsakh has received from the government of Armenia, as well as the advocates arguing on behalf of Armenia at the Hague and other international institutions, and finally the Armenian Diaspora, especially in large countries such as Russia, the US, and France. “We feel that we are not alone,” he said.

Stressing the importance of the US, France, and Russia, who are the co-chairs of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group, tasked with settling the issue of Karabakh’s status, and who also each host a large Armenian Diaspora population, Vardanyan stated that “it’s very important for us to get support

from these three major countries, despite the conflict they have about Ukraine.”

Vardanyan drove the point home that the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict is not a religious conflict or even an ethnic conflict. “It’s a conflict between democracy and autocracy,” he said. “We [Artsakh] have developed a democratic system in the last 35 years, of a civilized society.” Meanwhile, Azerbaijan “is controlled by one family who doesn’t give rights to their own people.”

Bringing up the “ecological protestors,” as an example of Azerbaijan’s hypocrisy Vardanyan stated that Artsakh has no problem allowing in international experts to actually assess the environmental damage of the mines. But pointing out that the protestors were actually sent by the Azerbaijani government, he stated “it would be interesting for any academic researcher to check how many protests happened about ecological or other issues in Azerbaijan, or whether the government has allowed its citizenry to take to the streets in protest at all. The point is that Azerbaijan is an autocracy, and the Armenians of Artsakh “have a right to live in our own homeland with our own [democratic] values,” stating that Artsakh is “ready for negotiations with Azerbaijan,” but that they are willing to “live side by side, but not under one state.”

Such a demand was absolutely not acceptable Aliyev, Vardanyan stated, since the Azerbaijani leader has stated that he “would rather have Artsakh without Armenians.” The principle of Self-Determination as well as other Free, Democratic principles are the only way to decide the outcome of the conflict, according to Vardanyan.

Krikorian Makes Case for Genocidal Intent

Krikorian responded to the situation in Artsakh with his own thoughts.

Considering that the question at hand is how to take practical steps to end the crisis, Krikorian said he feels that if viewed within the context of genocide, the ways in which to approach international organizations and major world powers, such as the US, should become apparent.

Krikorian stated that Azerbaijan’s attempt to commit genocide in Artsakh has been well established over the years, and if looked at through this lens, it is much easier to dismiss some of the “specious arguments” that Azerbaijan in making in behalf of their case. According to Krikorian, some of these arguments revolve around false statements about Vardanyan; some revolve around “both-sides-ism,” and some focus on “faulty historical issues.” But the most common arguments revolve around the “absolute corruption which is endemic to the Aliyev Regime,” which has been participated in by large corporations such as British Petroleum, Anglo Asian Mining, and others, including major PR firms. “We have a clear record going back many years and established with corresponding acts that the intent of the Azerbaijani regime is to solve the NK problem by eliminating the Armenians.”

Krikorian then recited a list of quotations depicting this genocidal intent, some chilling. In 2005, the mayor of Baku told a German delegation to the city that “our goal is the complete elimination of the Armenians. You, Nazis, already eliminated the Jews in the 1930s and ’40s, right? You should be able to understand us.”

In 2004, the Azerbaijani Defense Minister stated, “within 25 years there will be no state called Armenia in the South Caucasus.” (i.e. calling for the complete destruction of Armenia, and not just the re-annexation of Karabakh).

In 2015, the Azerbaijani dictator, Ilham Aliyev, stated “Armenia is not even a colony, it is not even worthy of being a servant.”

In November 2020, an Azerbaijani soccer press agent stated “We [Azerbaijanis] must kill all Armenians — children, women and the elderly. We need to kill them without making a distinction. No regrets. No compassion.”

In 2013, Aliyev stated “Our historical lands are Irevan [Yerevan] khanate, Goyce [Lake Sevan] and Zangezur regions. There will be times; we will live in these lands. I believe it, I am sure. Everyone should put their efforts in order to achieve it.”

Krikorian also noted a recording that was made of President Erdogan’s wife suggesting to Aliyev that he not send Armenian POWs back to Armenia in compliance with the ceasefire, but “keep them as bargaining chips.”

Krikorian concluded that there are “piles and piles of evidence” of genocidal intent. He stated that “this is not empty rhetoric” and it’s “not just a blockade of the Lachin Corridor.” “This is the cutting off of the gas supplies. The cutting off of electricity. The cutting off of internet... and increasingly... water resources were cut off.”

Next Steps

Krikorian noted that “within the coming days” members of the House of Representatives will be introducing legislation to sanction Azerbaijani officials for these actions.

He also noted that Aliyev and Erdogan are preparing the people of Azerbaijan for more war, for example with the “absolute racist museum” set up after the 2020 war, and the way Azerbaijan educates its children, which is “pure racism.” He called on people of good will, saying that “you cannot be against racism in other parts of the world, and turn a blind eye to the racism that is being exhibited here, regardless of companies’ profit margin.”

Krikorian noted that around the world it is considered important to preserve cultural heritage, noting the outcry when the Taliban destroyed the Bamiyan Buddhas. Therefore, the international community should also be paying attention to the destruction of Armenian cultural monuments by Azerbaijan. He also displayed a pamphlet from Anglo Asian Mining in which he says the company was “marketing” its ability to mine “around” the monastery of Dadivank. “It is exactly what everyone is supposed to be against, and we’re watching it happen,” Krikorian concluded.

Vardanyan stressed the need to keep the story of Artsakh before the international press, expressing pride that 40,000 stories have been published in world media outlets on the subject of the current crisis. “We definitely believe that keeping this pressure is very important” said Vardanyan.

The Minister further stated that he wanted to make it clear to the international community “from a state level,” that the aggression against Artsakh and treatment of Armenians is unacceptable from any point of view. Legal issues (as to which country the territory of Nagorno-Karabakh should belong) are irrelevant, because the blockade has caused human rights issues which are unacceptable by any standard.

Vardanyan also reiterated the need to airlift goods to Artsakh and strengthen the mandate of the Russian peacekeepers. He feels that the political situation should be resolved by international organizations, and that especially Russia, France, and the US, as co-chairs of the Minsk group, need to put away their differences at least for this one goal, and find a way to cooperate to save Artsakh, a fledgling democracy representing an ancient people and civilization.

Telling the story of his grandmother, a tough Artsakh native, Vardanyan expressed pride in his (re)adopted homeland. “It’s a privilege to live in Artsakh for me,” the minister stated.

COMMUNITY NEWS

Nelli Avetisyan Reinvents Medieval Armenian Soap-Making Traditions

SOAP, from page 6

to the consumers. That was another proof of the hormone use in these farms,” says Nelli.

Her research provided little concrete results, but she was determined to prove her convictions. When her students at Yerevan State University had to prepare their graduation papers, Nelli acted strategically: she divided the work between them and got a permit to use the labs at the Academician Emil Gabrielyan Scientific Center of Drug and Medical Technology Expertise. The results came in — and they were positive. One screening of the Getar and Geghanist rivers as well as in Lake Yerevan showed from 2 to 5 mkg/liter progesterone and hydrocortisone. “We mainly tested the waters in the fish farming area and found huge amounts of antibiotics and hormones used to stimulate the growth of the fish,” said Avetisyan.

Nelli also discovered triclosan and other chemical compounds used in soaps and detergents known as carcinogen, present in those findings. Since it did not look likely that the bureaucratic system would make major improvements, Nelli decided to use her own knowledge and the skills of a pharmacist and create a unique formula of soap — at that time the only one in the country.

In her historical house in Arabkir that once was a home for repatriates from Greece in the 1940s, Nelli started her natural soap production. “Soapmaking had a profound meaning for me: My goal was not only producing soaps but also expanding the nature of pharmacology,” added Nelli.



Tork'e, a specially developed biodegradable packaging

This time, Nelli went to the Matenadaran, the repository of ancient manuscripts in Yerevan, to look for the old recipes used in soapmaking in medieval Armenia. She found out about the ingredients to treat eczema used by 15th-century Armenian physician Amirdovlat of Amasia. Through various trials Nelly eventually recreated the soap, wrapped it in special packaging relating the story and its significance, and introduced it to consumers. “My goal was to teach people about Amirdovlat of Amasia and that we had a tradition in soapmaking dating back many decades,” she says.

Nelli didn't stop there. She went from village to village and gathered information about soaps that our ancestors used to make. That's how she found out about Lousik, who used Armenian green clay to grow hair in Martuny village in Gegharkunik province. Reformulated soap with this green clay naturally rich with silver is now in Nelly's soap collection for hair growth.

In 2015 at the conference of the Certification of Organic Products held in Yerevan, Nelly met with the grandson of Satenik, another local follower of a folk medicine of Gegharkunik province who was famous for her technique of flax oil compression, which was an important part of the folk medicine in Armenia. Nelli incorporated the rec-



Nelli Avetisyan at her booth at the Ginifest International Wines and Spirits Festival in Santa Monica, California,

ipe in her own production and introduced the reinvented flax seed soap, paying tribute to Satenik.

“Being a pharmacist helped me develop a more scientific approach to soapmaking techniques and gave them a therapeutic effect that was widespread in medieval Armenia,” adds Nelli.

Avetisyan Artisan Soaps creates products from pumpkin, thyme, chamomile, mint, coffee, hemp, lilac and other natural vegetables and plants, never using any artificial flavors or colors. They help different skin conditions and are also made for everyday use. The company also produces cold-pressed oils and makes its own base for soaps and other products, unlike other companies which buy a commercially made base. Nelli went even further and

manufactured a special biodegradable packaging called *tork'e* in which she wraps her balmy and colorful soaps.

In 2016 at the Armenian Folk Life Festival in Smithsonian Institute in Washington, Avetisyan Soaps were a sensation. After the event, Nelly decided to move to California and establish her soap production here by participating in many SoCal Etsy events, various farmer's markets and festivals, and by being one of the founding members of the Buy Armenian Marketplace.

Avetisyan Artisan Soaps starting in 2022 had a permanent stall at the Downtown Burbank Cultural Market, a unique artisanal weekly event that Hilda Avanesian founded with the goal of bringing together more than 30 vendors from diverse cultural backgrounds.



Twinleaf gift set

COMMUNITY NEWS

Washington Protests Bring Attention to Lachin Blockade

PROTEST, from page 1

condemning Azerbaijan’s blockade of Artsakh, authored by Reps. Pallone, Sherman, and the Armenian Caucus Co-Chairs to not only condemn Azerbaijan’s blockade, but also investigate war crimes, enforce 907, and cut US military aid to Azerbaijan, providing necessary humanitarian relief and aide to the suffering 120,000 or more people of Artsakh.

The assembled then held a demonstration on the Capitol Grounds with several speakers including Representatives Adam Schiff of California, and Frank Pallone of New Jersey. Schiff told the demonstrators that the people of Artsakh have a right to self-determination and that not a dime or even a single red cent of American money or support should go to the “Butcher of Baku”, Aliyev, or to Azerbaijan!

Pallone, one of the co-authors of the resolution, similarly added his voice to Schiff’s. According to the ANCA website, he said, “One of the things that we do at the Armenian Caucus is meet with the State Department and put as much pressure as possible on them to pressure Azerbaijan to stop the blockade. We know that Aliyev wants all of the Armenians out of Artsakh. We know that this is a form of genocide. There is no question about it. We know that all of the excuses being used about environmentalists are just nonsense... We cannot have any peace as long as there is a threat to the people of Artsakh. Artsakh is Armenian. Artsakh must remain Armenian,” stated Rep. Pallone.

More protest demonstrations have taken place around the world by Armenians and their allies, and are schedule in the immediate future until the blockade is broken and the people of the tiny Republic of Artsakh are relieved of their suffering.

(See a video by Mirror-Spectator Video Correspondent Haykaram Nahapetyan accompanying this article and a video by Ken Martin at mirrorspectator.com. All photos here by Ken Martin.)



DEMONSTRATION TO END
THE REPUBLIC OF ARTSAKH BLOCKADE





THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 16TH, 2023
11am-1pm

MASSACHUSETTS STATE HOUSE
BOSTON, MA



For over two months, the 120,000 Armenians of the Republic of Artsakh (also known as Nagorno Karabakh), including 30,000 children, have been under blockade. They are running out of medicines, food and other necessities, while gas, electricity and Internet access are periodically disrupted.

The government of Azerbaijan is attempting in this way to ethnically cleanse the native Armenian population of Artsakh and annex its territories, and Russian peacekeepers have been unable to intervene effectively.

The United States and various European governments have condemned the blockade. The Armenian-American community of greater Boston asks that you contact your government representatives to get the US to go one step further.

Ask them to apply direct pressure on Azerbaijan to end the blockade and organize an international airlift of supplies and aid to Artsakh, akin to that of Berlin in 1948-49.

Finally, ask them to sanction Aliyev and send a strong message that the USA will not tolerate dictators trampling on basic human rights.

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Arts & Culture

Armenian State Awards Composer And Conductor Konstantin Petrossian

WASHINGTON — On Friday February 3, composer and conductor Maestro Konstantin Petrossian, the music and cultural director of Sts. Sahag and Mesrob Church in Providence, and his wife Janna Petrossian, organist of the same church, were accompanied by their pastor Fr. Shnork Souin to the Embassy of the Republic of Armenia in Washington, D.C. for a ceremony in which Ambassador of the Republic of Armenia Lilit Makunts presented the conductor with the highest state honorary title of Honored Armenian Artist from the president and government of the Republic of Armenia.

There was an elaborate and love-



Konstantin Petrossian with Ambassador Lilit Makunts

ly reception in the maestro's honor during which the medal and proclamation were awarded.

The ambassador mentioned the outstanding role of the composer and conductor in the development of Armenian music and art and wished him continued creative success. Petrossian in turn thanked the president of the Republic of Armenia and Makunts for the high award as well as thanked the guests present, including the representative of the office of Rhode Island Sen. Jack Reed. He expressed his gratitude also to the ambassador and staff for organizing this memorable ceremony.

Fr. Souin offered thanksgiving to the Republic of Armenia, its embassy, ambassador and staff, diplomats and guests on behalf of Saints Sahag and Mesrob Church and closed with a prayer and blessing upon Petrossian, the ambassador and the governments of the United States of America and the Republics of Armenia and Artsakh.

Petrossian is the recipient of the Movses Khorenatsi Medal of Armenia for exceptional services in the development of Armenian culture, as well as the Sts. Sahag and Mesrob Medal, the highest award of the Armenian Apostolic Church.

He moved to the United States in 1995 and serves as the cultural and music director of Sts. Sahag and Mesrob Armenian Church of Providence.



Lucía Jiménez Pernas in Armenia

Lucía Jiménez Pernas *From Cuba with Love*

By Artsvi Bakhchiyan
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN/HAVANA, Cuba — Lucía Jiménez Pernas was born in 1976, in Havana.

She graduated from the Enrique Jose Varona Pedagogic Superior Institute. She is currently a registrar and also a teacher at the School of Energy and Mines.

In 2017, some Armenian and Spanish-language websites started to tell Lucía's story about her special trip to Armenia to find her father and discover his land.

Dear Lucía, "searching for roots" is a sensitive subject for many people. A logical question is might be: could you not continue your life without visiting your father's country?

Yes, I could, but it would have been an incomplete life full of questions. Visiting Armenia twice (I visited in September 2017 and in October-November 2018 for the 2,800th anniversary of the city) made me fully know myself, understand why I was always different in Cuba. Getting to know Armenia and my father allowed me to understand the origin of some of my characteristics, tastes and way of being.

Were you not afraid about being disappointed?

Yes, I was afraid, but I went with two objectives: to know my father and my roots. Fortunately, I achieved both and both exceeded my expectations.

Was your father aware of your existence?

My father did not know of my existence until the interview came out in the media. I will never give information about my father's family because I promised them; also because I appreciate that they accepted me despite it having been a surprise for everyone. I feel respect for them and I am grateful for receiving me. I will always respect them!

Is there something in your character that was different from others, which you ascribe to your Armenian origin?

I think so, to mention a few I would say my devotion to the family, respect for the elderly, taste for food, perseverance, among others.

At one time, there was a small Armenian community on Cuba. There was even an Armenian-born Cuban poet, David Chericíán. Have you ever met Armenians in Cuba and elsewhere before your travel to Armenia?

I did not know of that poet of Armenian origin. I met an Armenian in Cuba at a business fair and he was someone who wanted to help me in my search, but nothing was achieved at that time. He lived in Mexico, he was representing the Noyan brand. He was very kind to me and gave me a DVD with the documentary about Armenia and also gave me a taste of his products. Of course, when I arrived in Armenia, I always bought Noyan juices, and my favorite one was the rose juice. In my trips outside of Cuba I never met other Armenians.

When Cher visited Armenia in 1993, later she wrote: "It was the only place in the world where everybody looked like me." Did you have similar feeling?

Yes, I had that same feeling and I expressed it to my loved ones. In Cuba when I walk the streets, they think I am not Cuban and they speak to me in English, in Armenia from the first day when I walked the streets, they spoke to me in Armenian and they thought I was a native.

Well, what was the most unusual thing for you in Armenia?

The most unusual thing was the kindness and familiarity of the people and the safety I felt on the streets. By the way, I never kept any journal, but on my first trip I decided I had to and went to Vernissage and I bought one with the handmade Armenian alphabet. I visited many places in my two trips — Victory Park, Mother Armenia see PERNAS, page 13

Comedian Kev Orkian to Serve As Museum Gala Master of Ceremonies

GLENDAL — The Armenian American Museum and Cultural Center of California has announced that internationally acclaimed and award-winning entertainer Kev Orkian will serve as the master of ceremonies at the Elevate Gala to be held on Sunday, March 19, at the Fairmont Century Plaza in Los Angeles.

Stated Kev Orkian, "It is an honor to support the elevation of an institution where Armenian culture and heritage will be preserved, celebrated, and showcased for all."

Orkian is a notable actor, musician, and comedian who has earned a reputation as one of the United Kingdom's finest entertainers. A highly skilled musician, he has honed his art to perfection over many years, from his days as a classical concert pianist to performing stand-up comedy throughout the world. He has starred in numerous musicals, plays, and TV shows during his illustrious career. In 2017, he released his must watch documentary film called "Armenia Uncovered" to tell the world about his homeland and its talented people.

The Elevate Gala will celebrate the completion of the first phase of construction featuring the museum parking garage and building foundation and mark the next exciting chapter for the Armenian American Museum as the landmark center is elevated to the horizon as a destination for education, enrichment, and inspiration for generations to come.

The Armenian American Museum is a world-class educational and cultural institution that is currently



Comedian Kev Orkian

under construction on the museum campus at Glendale Central Park. The museum will offer a wide range of public programming through the Permanent Exhibition, Temporary Exhibitions, Auditorium, Learning Center, Demonstration Kitchen, Archives Center, and more.

Elevate Gala sponsorship, program book ads, and ticket reservations are due by February 15, 2023.

Learn more about the Elevate Gala at <https://ArmenianAmericanMuseum.org/Gala>.

ARTS & CULTURE

Artist-Painter Marine Zuloian’s Works to Go on Exhibit in Seattle

By Christine Vartanian Datian
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

SEATTLE — Marine Zuloian, a resident of Seattle, will feature her paintings at a “Spring in its Fragrances and Colors” Exhibition on March 31 to May 15, 2023, at Seattle’s famous Lakewold Gardens in Lakewood, Wash. Zuloian is an independent artist and entrepreneur embracing Armenian culture through various media.

Born and raised in Armenia, Zuloian studied at the School of Fine Arts Yeghishe Tadevossian and the Faculty of Fine Arts of Yerevan State University of Education. Along with her studies, Zuloian taught painting and the history of art at the Echmiadzin College.

After receiving scholarships from St. Basil Anglican Foundation, Zuloian and her husband moved to Toronto to study English, theology, and art at the University of Toronto. She is married to Archpriest Vazken Boyajyan, parish priest of the Holy Resurrection Armenian Church in Redmond, Wash.

Painting has long been a part of her life. “I could sit and be busy all day long. My mother noticed my dedication to it, instead of playing outside with other kids, I would stay home to draw and paint. She decided to enroll me in an art school,” Zuloian said.

Zuloian has participated in numerous exhibitions in Canada, the United States,



Marine Zuloian

and Europe. Her works are found in many private and public collections. Zuloian’s work consists of oils, acrylics, and watercolors. The artist has gained wide recognition thanks to her diligence and creativity. She has actively participated in various non-profits and commercial organizations. Her works were exhibited in the following: Zorayan Museum, St. Leon Cathedral, Burbank, CA.; Gallery Klimantiris, Montreal, QC; Tekeyan Armenian Cultural Association, Montreal, QC; Centre Sanahin, Montreal; AGBU Montreal; St. Vartan Armenian Church, Vancouver; Association Polsahay, Montreal; Gallery Plus, Hudson, QC; Lebovic Gallery Toronto, ON; Hamazkayin Toronto, ON; Saint-John San Francisco, CA; Saint-Andrew Cuper-

tino, CA; Palais Bondy (Art ALP), Léon, France; Hovnanian School, Milford, NJ; Armenian Museum of Fresno, CA.

“I met Marine Zuloian several years ago when she came to my gallery to show me her works,” says Chris Klimantiris, President/Director of Galerie Klimantiris in Montreal. “I was immediately fascinated by her enormous talent. The purity and beauty of her paintings cannot be denied. Her elegant and well-thought-of compositions are breathtaking. Avid art collectors were also smitten by her works resulting in numerous sold-out shows in my gallery. I

can say without hesitation that today Marine Zuloian ranks among the truly talented artists, assuring her a permanent presence in the art world. To have worked with Marine has been one of my greatest joys.” – Chris Klimantiris, President/Director of Galerie Klimantiris and Art Dealer.

The exhibition is open to public. Lakewold Gardens is a unique historic estate surrounded by 10 acres of formal and natural settings where Zuloian’s Exhibition will be held on March 31 to May 15, 2023.

For more information, visit <https://lakewoldgardens.org/>



“Dialogue Sur Sayat-Nova,” 32” x 38”, Oil on canvas, 2021 by Marine Zuloian

Lucía Jiménez Pernas: From Cuba with Love

PERNAS, from page 12
Monument, Echmiadzin, Zvartnots, Garni, Amberd Fortress, Vahramashen Church, Charentsavan Church, Lake Sevan, Lake Kari, Mount Aragats, Khor Virap, among other places. In Yerevan I visited almost all the museums and notable places. I used to go on Sundays to the Church of Saint Anne and the Cathedral of Saint Gregory the Illuminator. I walked in the beautiful gardens of the National Assembly. There is not a day that while in Cuba I do not walk in the streets of Yerevan in my mind! I remember each place, the smells, the flavors. My body is in Cuba, but my spirit walks through my beautiful Yerevan, the city of my dreams!

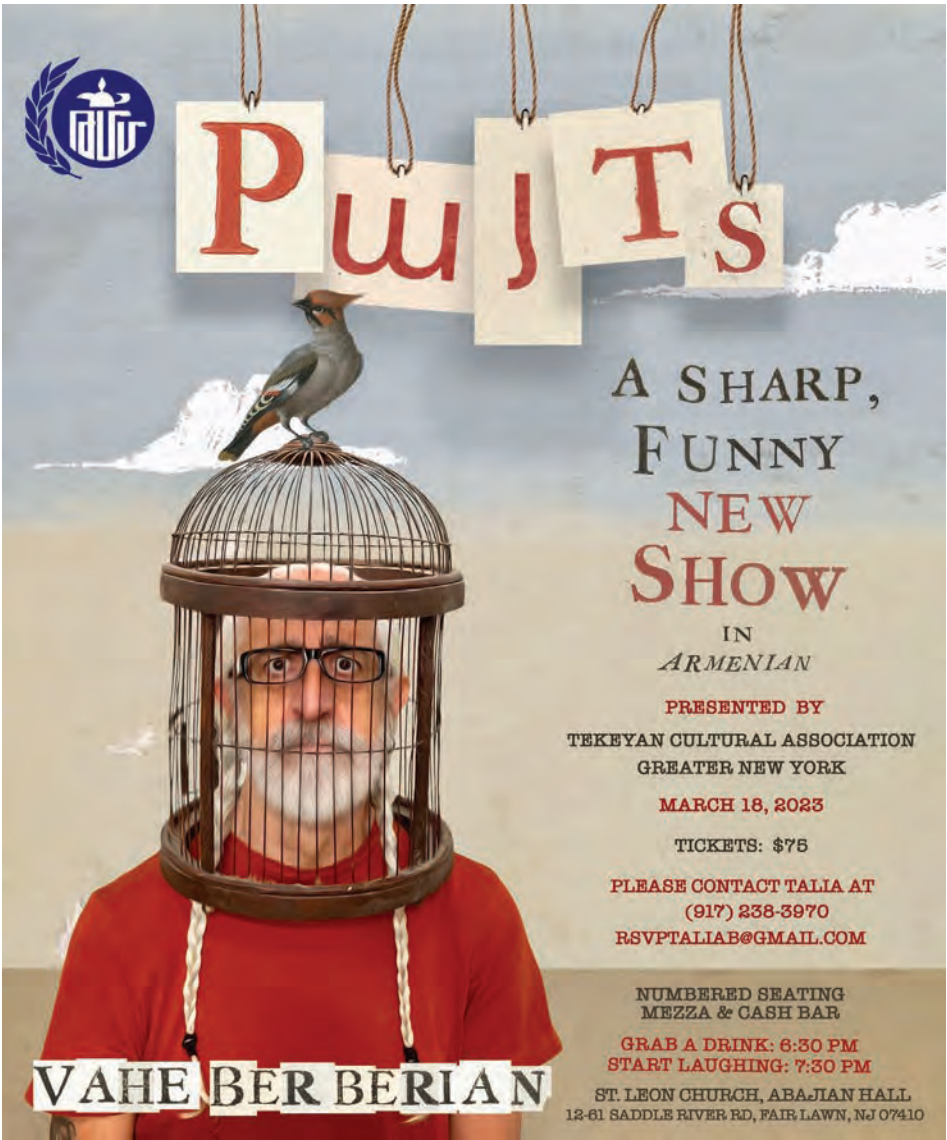
Are you a different person after your visit to Armenia?

Definitely yes. There is a new Lucia after my trip to Armenia. I am a different

person in every way and I am grateful to have had that experience because now I feel complete and prouder of my Armenian roots. Since my birth I live in Cuba, I like Cuba, especially the sea and its beaches; but I dream of being able to live a part of my life in Armenia. I feel that I owe that debt to myself. I have an immense need to delve into the culture, history and traditions of the sacred land of my paternal ancestors and I believe that there is no better way to do it than to live there. I hope that this dream comes true for me like finding my beloved father, then I will strive to achieve it.

Thanks for your answers, Lucía. And you are always welcome to visit your father’s country again and again!

Thank you very much for giving me the opportunity to feel Armenian, that is one of my greatest pride since I was a child!




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ARTS & CULTURE

Books

A Heart Immaculate and True: Poet Vahe-Vahian's Love Letters

By Arpi Sarafian

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

The world of Armenian literature is all the richer for the compilation of renowned poet Vahe-Vahian's private letters, published posthumously in 2012, under the title *The Heart of the Poet*. The 441 letters assembled in the hefty volume are divided into three sections: letters of literary and aesthetic interest, letters dealing with national and public issues, and more intimate exchanges.



Vahe-Vahian

I would like to focus here on the seventy or so love letters which can be thought of as works of art, displaying the same mastery of our *kaghts-rahoonch* Western Armenian, Vahe-Vahian knew so well and loved so well, as do his other writings. In these letters the poet opens his heart to expose, in his words, "all that is true and pure in there." Indeed, with their audacity and their sincerity, the love letters reaffirm the veracity of the remaining conversations the poet has with fellow writers, which comprise the bulk of the compilation. Even when it means hurting the feelings of, and possibly losing, a good

friend, Vahe-Vahian offers honest criticism of the work submitted to him, not only to help and to guide the writer, but also because his desire for the truth supersedes every other consideration. Aram Sepetjian, editor of *The Heart of the Poet*, rightly notes: "These letters are documentation to his literature."

When I shared my excitement about his father's love letters with Tsolak Abdalian, "You sound like you're going to write about them," said Tsolak. Nothing could have been further from the truth at the time. Yet, the idea had taken seed in my mind. I had always revered my high school Armenian language and literature teacher. I had also known the poet, and admired the critic and the translator. The fervent lover, however, was someone I did not even imagine existed. These exquisitely written letters revealed to me the passionate lover as well.

Included in the volume are the letters addressed to the women Vahe-Vahian had intimate relationships with, roughly stretching across the years 1932 to 1952. These include the earlier letters to Siran Seza, pen name for Siranoush Zarifian, best known in the Lebanese Armenian intellectual community for founding the feminist journal *The Young Armenian Woman*, in 1932, and later missives addressed to his wife, and mother of his three children, Ashkhen Abdalian, a fellow teacher he met at the Melkonian Educational Institute in Nicosia, Cyprus.

The letters to "Siran Janig" express the poet's intoxication with "the girl with the sad liquid eyes." These letters



are full of images of "the sun caressing the blue Mediterranean," his tiny room at Broummana High School, where he taught in the early 1930's, overlooked. The bold lover invites "my sweet Siran" to his village, to "the peace of nature." Besides his burning desire for "the fairy-tale girl," however, the letters reveal the hurt of his betrayal. Indeed, the letters expressing his wrath at "my impossible lover" are some of the fiercest addressed to Siran. "I hear the obscene wind torturing the trees and giggling. I hear the sound of waves shattering into pieces," he writes, as he waits for "a miracle to happen for Siran to show up."

Vahe-Vahian describes himself as "melancholic and sad," always yearning, always dissatisfied. Which may very well be why he carries on a steady correspondence

continued on next page

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ARTS & CULTURE

from previous page
(platonic?) with the “good and virtuous” Lucy Potoukian, a “loving friend” he calls “a sister,” in the early thirties. The poet writes to Lucy when his “mind is weary,” and he needs to “come out of the claws of gloom.” It may also be true that the poet is half in love with “sweet pain.” “I long for the sweetness of pain,” he confides to Lucy.” In fact, the “suffering man” expresses contempt for “all peaceful states.” “A struggling soul is dearer to me,” he writes.

Nonetheless, I see in the poet’s letters to “Ashkhen *hokees*,” the answer to his, “Where am I going and where shall I end?” The “endless search” of a grieving soul has finally found “a resting place.” There are, to be sure, some hurt feelings between the two, yet what one leaves the letters with is the poet’s deep affection for the “sweet girl” he wishes to “be happy together.” “When I think that we two are subject to the same laws of collapse and decay, my heart shivers,” he writes. In Ashkhen, the “palpable reality I can see with my eyes and caress

takes her beyond her role of wife and mother. “I am the woman for you,” she writes. “Just change your glasses and you’ll see her.” The poet’s letters may be “calculated and weighed before being committed to paper,” while hers “want to explode without any calculation,” yet, her “To be happy, we need to think, to feel and to live life on this earth . . . a truth, sweet and simple, for which we live *you* and *I*,” sums up everything the poet has yearned for and tried to express.

Vahe-Vahian’s letters, while addressed to specific individuals, are also meditations on life, full of wisdom, yet never preachy. “Happiness is a big word, impossible to measure, but it is made up of small things,” he writes to Ashkhen. “Wise are those who appreciate those small things and build their big life with them.” Elsewhere the poet notes, “Before anything else, a healthy man notices the good and the beautiful things in life and rejoices in them. . . . Life is full of crooked and faulty things too . . . We need to notice and try to correct them, but to grow bitter and to turn against life because



Բանաստեղծին դիմանկարը
գործ Աշոտ Զորյանի, 1949
Vahe-Vahian portrait by Ashot Joryani

with my fingers” meets the “spiritual companion” the poet has always longed for.
The letters to “my sweet Ashkhen” are also the boldest expressions of the poet’s hunger for physical intimacy, affirming his belief that, for a complete and solid relationship, “Imagining is not enough: reality is needed.” Vahe-Vahian’s letters to his wife do indeed have the immediacy of lived experience. When his “sweet lover” travels to Istanbul, the two-month intermission in their sixteen-year-old relationship becomes a matter of life and death to him. The poet’s earlier struggles to “get Siran out of my mind” fade against his fear of losing his wife. “There is one reality in my life, that of my children and their mother,” he writes to her. When Ashkhen’s health becomes worrisome, the poet begs her to be strong, so she can give him the strength and the certainty he needs. “Valiant mother, don’t deny me that strength,” he pleads.
Interestingly, what adds even more intensity to the poet’s letters to his wife are his “dear girl’s” equally passionate responses to them. Ashkhen Abdalian’s letters to Sarkis *djan* reveal a woman whose self-confidence

of them - never, at no time.”
We all like to be privy to the intimate lives of our great poets. It is, in fact, not uncommon for writers to publish their letters, and the disclosure of personal information in them will surely disturb some. Once the writing is made public, however—and I cannot think of an activity that is more “public” than writing—people can react any way they please. More important, there is something about good literature that takes it beyond the particularities of the lives of the characters involved, and makes the work of art something for everyone to savor. Vahe-Vahian’s letters are such works of art. The poet’s impeccable prose (oxymoron?) seduces the reader. We can only be thankful that the letters have been made available to us. Being invited into his inner world has brought me infinitely closer to the teacher I revered.
This year marks the 25th anniversary of the death of Vahe-Vahian. What better way to honor the poet’s memory, and to celebrate, than to delve into the love letters of one who “wanted to love the whole universe, love everything and everyone in it . . . with a deep, expansive love.”

CALENDAR

OF EVENTS & PROGRAMS

MASSACHUSETTS

- FEBRUARY 16 — Demonstration to end the blockade of the Republic of Artsakh, 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Massachusetts State House, 24 Beacon St, Boston. Sponsored by the Pan Armenian Council of New England.**
- FEBRUARY 18 – Sts. Vartanantz Poon Paregentan (“Great Carnival”) Dinner-Dance. A terrific family evening of great food, music and dancing. Featuring the fabulous Ani Ensemble – Joe Kouyoumjian, Oud; Dave Anisbigian, guitar and vocals; Art Chingris, Dumbeg; and Ara Jeknavorian, clarinet. Also featuring the latest dance tunes from Armenia and America Pop music. 180 Old Westford Rd., Chelmsford. 5:30 p.m. Adults: \$30. Students: \$15. Children under 6: free. Paid reservation must be made by February 14 either on the church website, www.stsvartanantz.com or by contacting Corie Horan, coriehoran@gmail.com.**
- FEBRUARY 25 — The 128th Anniversary of the Lowell Aharonian Gomideh of the ARF. The Armenian Church at High Pointe, 1280 Boston Rd, Haverhill. Dinner-program. Narrated slide presentation by Joe Dagdigian: “Unseen Armenia: A brief glimpse of People, Places, and Projects.” Keynote Speaker: Reverend Father Vart Gyozyan - “Current Life and Conditions in Armenia.” Donation: Adults- \$35 and Students: \$20. Reservations Required. For Tickets: Call or email Armen at 978-265-9479, armenjeknavorian@gmail.com or Ara 617-803-2612, ara.a.jeknavorian@gmail.com. Tables of 8 to 10 may be reserved in advance.**
- APRIL 16 — Annual Reconfiguration of the Abstract Sculpture, Armenian Heritage Park on the Greenway, Boston. Sunday beginning at 7:30 a.m. Supported by the Park’s Charles and Doreen Bilezikian Endowed Fund. Rain date: April 23. For details, email hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org**

NEW JERSEY

- MARCH 18 — The Tekeyan Cultural Association of Greater New York presents “Payts,” a new show from comedy great Vahe Berberian. Tickets \$75. Talia (917) 238-3970 or RSVPtaliab@gmail.com. Numbered seating and mezza and cash bar. Cocktails at 6.30 p.m., program to start at 7.30. St. Leon Church, Abajian Hall, 12-61 Saddle River Road, Fair Lawn.**
- MAY 13 — Save the Date! The Tekeyan Cultural Association Mher Megerdchian Theatrical Group will mark its 25th anniversary with a gala. Details to follow.**

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ARTS & CULTURE

Recipe Corner



by Christine Vartanian



Hajimom's Dzedzadz

Hajimom's Dzedzadz - A Cherished Wheat and Meat Casserole

Photos, recipes, and history contributed by Ruth Bedevian.

WYCKOFF, N.J. — “My paternal great-grandmother Hajimom passed into her eternal rest when I was 8 months old,” says Ruth Bedevian. “Anna Najimian Bakalian is sleeping in Flower Hill Cemetery in North Bergen, New Jersey. Indeed, she is far from her birthplace of Dikranagerd, the ancient city founded by Tigranes the Great, and ruled by Sultan Abdul Hamid II, ruler of the Ottoman Empire at the time of her birth (circa early 1840s). In 1900, my Hajimom arrived at Ellis Island with an identification tag pinned to her coat. Her 12-year-old grandson, Khoren, her newly remarried daughter, Soghme, and son-in-law Shahpaz Shahbazian, were temporarily living in a boarding house in Pawtucket, Rhode Island. The manifest states that her destination was 110 Buffalo Avenue, Paterson, New Jersey. It was the residence of the Najimian family where her brothers had settled. She was born a Najimian; her married surname was Bakalian, but she was entered into the United States records as Najimian.”

“Like many Armenian Genocide survivors, Hajimom neither spoke about nor obsessively lingered on the horrors and pain she suffered when she was violently widowed at a young age. Two Turkish soldiers had entered her home and slaughtered her husband and two sons before her eyes during the Hamidian Massacres (1894-1896) in the southeastern provinces of the Ottoman Empire. Chaos and turmoil prevailed in the household and the surviving spouses and children scattered for refuge,” says Ruth.

“I cannot remember feeling the warmth of her embrace nor the soft kisses upon my forehead since I was very young at the time. Nevertheless, I have felt the blessings of her goodness and love all the days of my life. My earliest memories are stories of Hajimom told to me on the long Sunday afternoon drives when my parents, Karnig and Alice, would delight my brother and me with their narrations. More stories overflowed from uncles, aunts and older cousins to the point of my perfect enthrallment of her ‘sainthood.’ Her moniker derived from being a haji (pilgrim) as evidenced by the blue tattoo that she bore upon her right arm and from being the surrogate mom. The affectionate designation disclosed a natural blend of the Old World from which she came and the New World to which she acclimated. To everyone in our family, she was endearingly addressed as Hajimom.”

Ruth adds, “Our family agrees that the kitchen was always our Dikranagerdtsi Hajimom’s domain and that is where she reigned as a queen. My mother, Alice, whose Roupenian clan hailed from Kharpert, learned to cook many traditional Dikranagerdtsi style foods by watching Hajimom (Kharpert is the Voski Dasht, the Golden Plain, of the Armenian Plateau.) Her ‘dzedzadz’ is a Shahbazian family tradition and Thanksgiving Day is not complete without a steaming tray of this dish set upon the table. It is a hearty mixture of wheat and seasoned meat, a treasured recipe I have been unable to find in a dozen Armenian cookbooks. It must be a particularly Dikranagerdtsi recipe or truly one of Hajimom’s own special creations.”

“‘Dzedzadz’ means ‘something beaten’ in Armenian. Hajimom taught my mother how to make this dish when she was a new bride. I am sure she used lamb, but I have always used beef. The beef has to be less lean to give the right taste,” says Ruth.

“Hajimom was a grand old lady, as my mother described her, “She was filled with wisdom, knowledge, and gentleness. She was very clean and neat. She wore separate cuffs that covered her dress sleeves up to her elbows so that she would not stain her clothing while going about her chores. She had long, snow-white hair that she combed carefully and tied into a soft knot at the nape of her neck.”

“Over 125 years have passed since the Hamidian Massacres violently and brutally erased the trace of my family history. It is, however, ultimately the noble and righteous good that always remains. Thus, our family history is buried with the victims and therefore begins with Hajimom in the New World and with her new life with which she was graced by Providence. Memories and warm remembrances about my family and my beloved Hajimom fill my heart each day,” says Ruth.

Special Thanks:

This recipe is reprinted with permission from Robyn Kalajian at her essential Armenian food blog: <https://thearmeniankitchen.com/>. Robyn adds, “This recipe was handed down from Ruth’s adored great-grandmother, Anna Najimian Bakalian, who was born in Dikranagerd in 1839, and died in 1939 at age 100 in Cliffside Park, New Jersey. Ruth did not know Hajimom but has heard many wonderful stories and memories about her from her family members through the years. I had the pleasure of chatting with my friend Ruth while on a recent visit to New Jersey. She asked if I’d ever heard of a recipe called dzedzadz. I knew that dzedzadz (spelling varies) was a grain used in preparing keshkeg (herriseh), the national dish of Armenia, but I’d never heard of it as a specific recipe. This is a hearty dish to serve for that special family celebration or gathering.”

Hajimom's Dzedzadz - A Wheat and Meat Casserole

Serves 10-12.

INGREDIENTS:

- 3 cups gorgort (shelled whole grain wheat), rinsed and drained
- 3 lbs. ground beef (75-80% lean)
- 3 tablespoons salt
- 3 tablespoons ground coriander (“keenz”)
- 4 tablespoons allspice
- 1 teaspoon pepper
- 1 large bunch Italian parsley, chopped
- 6-8 large onions, finely chopped

*White whole wheat berry is skinned or polished to remove some of the bran (the outer skin) to make this shelled (pearled) wheat for faster cooking. Armenian style lamb stew (keshkeg) herriseh and a festival pudding is made exceptionally with shelled wheat.

PREPARATION:

Cook gorgort for 1 hour in 2 quarts water, according to directions. When cooked, let gorgort stay in the pot, covered, for an additional hour. (Note: This dish may also be cooked in a crockpot for 2-3 hours.)

Meanwhile, brown the meat with the seasonings until well-cooked. (Do not drain fat because that’s what keeps the dish moist and somewhat juicy.)

Mix the cooked gorgort with the browned meat mixture. You may freeze at this point or otherwise continue: add the chopped parsley and onions, and mix well. Pour into a shallow roasting pan or Corning Ware (12” x 15”). Bake, uncovered at 350°F for 30-40 minutes. Remove from oven and let sit 10 minutes before serving.

Hajimom's Homemade Dough for Armenian Boereg

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
- 3/4 cup whole milk
- 3-4 ounces mozzarella curd or Armenian sweet cheese*
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 3/4 cup melted shortening or olive oil (“Crisco and Spry were staples in Hajimom’s kitchen, today olive oil is preferred,” says Ruth)

PREPARATION:

Combine the flour, milk, and salt. Knead into a smooth, soft dough, adding flour as necessary. Roll thin and cut into circles, using a 4 to 5-inch saucer from an Armenian coffee cup for shaping. Flour the surface generously as you roll. Fill with the cheese.

Fold dough over into half-moon shapes and pinch edges with a fork. Use the fork to also pierce the top. Heat the shortening or oil in a fry pan. Sauté until golden brown, approximately 3-5 minutes on each side.

Makes 8-10 boeregs.

*Mozzarella curd is the solid and the liquid is either whey, brine or water. This curd is produced by a process of curdling the milk and is used in a variety of Italian and international dishes from Neapolitan pizza to Caesar salads. Spry was a brand of vegetable shortening produced by Lever Brothers starting in 1936. It was a competitor for Procter & Gamble’s Crisco, and through aggressive marketing through its mascot <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aunt_Jenny> Aunt Jenny had reached 75 percent of Crisco’s market share. Spry was a major competitor to Crisco. During its heyday in the 1950s, a large blinking sign advertising Spry on the New Jersey side of the Hudson River was a memorable part of the Manhattan evening skyline, mentioned several times in <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_New_Yorker> The New Yorker magazine and appearing at least once on its cover.

COMMENTARY

THE ARMENIAN MIRROR SPECTATOR

SINCE 1932



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EDITORIAL

Sergei Lavrov Justifies Azerbaijan's War against Armenia



By Edmond Y. Azadian

ist mercenaries.

That war blew the cover of mystery draped over the strategic partnership between Armenia and Russia, as the latter failed in its treaty obligations towards Armenia, and thus it has been trying to find justification for that failure through intense verbal gymnastics.

The Armenian-Russian strategic partnership was based on the mutually exclusive paradigm of two axioms, which eventually collided to reveal its false pretenses in the cold light of day. On the one side, Moscow has taken for granted that it can drag Armenia in any direction it needs as a foot soldier, even where Armenia's sovereignty is threatened. This cavalier attitude was manifested by President Vladimir Putin's megaphone Alexander Lukashenko, the Belarussian dictator, who in February 2022 contemptuously pronounced at a meeting of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), a Russian-centered security organization of which Armenia is a fellow member along with Belarus, "Armenia has nowhere to go. Who needs Armenia?"

The other axiom, from the Armenian perspective, was that Armenia did not need a military doctrine, or for that matter, any other strategic partner, as long as it relied on Russia. However, the political trends in the region evolved in different directions and Russia's interests became aligned with those of Azerbaijan and Turkey, rendering Armenia the outlier. As a result, a crisis developed between Russian-Armenian relations, as the latter sought help elsewhere to shore up its security.

Mr. Lavrov assured Armenia during a press conference in Yerevan in July that roads and communication lines which will be built or unblocked will operate exclusively under the jurisdiction of the states through which they run. He was referring to the "Zangezur Corridor" through Armenia's Syunik province, which has become a cause célèbre for Turkey and Azerbaijan, to link Baku with Nakhichevan. That same statement was publicly made by Russia's Deputy Prime Minister Alexi Overchuk, who is part of a team of deputy prime ministers, including those of Armenia and Azerbaijan, tasked with working on the demarcation of the borders between the latter two.

Recently, however, the Russian side has maintained that instead of Armenia, Russia should manage the "Zangezur Corridor."

Now, after Moscow's failure to prevent the 44-Day War or provide the succor it was legally obligated, comes the crisis of the Lachin Corridor, which through the declaration of November 9, 2020, came under Russian jurisdiction as an extra-territorial passageway.

Following the blocking of this sole road connecting Armenia and Artsakh on December 12, certain actions and counteractions pushed Mr. Lavrov into a corner, where he finally justified Azerbaijan's war against Armenia during an interview this week on Russian television. The dénouement did not come suddenly and it had been expected.

Last September, Mr. Lavrov had invited the foreign ministers of Armenia and Azerbaijan to hold negotiations in Moscow. Armenia's Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan refused to participate on the grounds that he was too busy with the Lachin Corridor crisis. Mr. Lavrov took the opportunity to lambaste the Armenian side, saying it had missed a valuable opportunity to seal a peace deal with Azerbaijan, and together with Mr. Jeyhun Bayramov, the Azerbaijani foreign minister,

they turned the forum into an anti-Armenian blame game, as if some half dozen prior meetings in similar formats had produced any results.

At all these previous gatherings, the foreign ministers had just spun their wheels and returned home emptyhanded. This particular meeting in Moscow had been scheduled to deny the limelight to Brussels, which had been taking the lead in negotiations.

The other area of contention was Armenia's appeal to the International Court of Justice, also known as the World Court, accusing Azerbaijan of racism and ethnic cleansing in Karabakh. This appeal did not jibe well with the Kremlin's policies. But Armenia has made headway at the court as Azerbaijan's counterarguments were shredded and a positive verdict is anticipated soon.

The last CSTO meeting in Yerevan was another opportunity for a confrontation between Armenia and Russia, as Moscow was pushing Armenia to sign the final statement of the meeting, which Pashinyan refused. The confrontation further escalated when Armenia refused to host CSTO military drills on its territory this year.

The reason Pashinyan refused to sign the document was that it did not name Azerbaijan as the aggressor in the war, and in addition, the participants failed to recognize Armenia's border with Azerbaijan.

Mr. Lavrov, a veteran of diplomacy, in his eloquent way, tried to blame Armenia for refusing to host CSTO observers on its territory, when the CSTO is by definition not a monitoring group, but a military alliance bound to defend its members. Armenia said thanks, but no thanks. Certainly the group had numerous chances — as well as signed obligation — to help Armenia during the disastrous war. They instead twisted and turned their statement of purpose and watched from the sidelines as Armenia was pummeled and Karabakh occupied. Indeed, most of the members of CSTO, particularly Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan congratulated President Ilham Aliyev on his "victory" against Armenia. Additionally, Kazakhstan, in particular, last week took part in wargames headed by Turkey and Azerbaijan, in Kars, near Armenia's borders.

Mr. Lavrov has taken the European Union (EU) monitors' presence on Armenian-Azerbaijan border more painfully. Last year the EU stationed 40 civilian monitors on Armenia-Azerbaijan border. Azerbaijan did not admit them on its territory, but took their presence under advisement.

Last year's 40 monitors could not deter a massive aggression, but they played a restraining role as witnesses on the border. And indeed, their presence discouraged any escalation. This time around, based on last year's experience, the EU has been stationing 100 monitors for a two-year period. Their number could rise to 200 to include 70 French gendarmes who will carry light weapons.

Incidentally, the EU monitors have been stationed on the Georgia-Russia border since 2008 and the border has remained quiet.

President Aliyev has argued against the stationing of the EU monitors. But Mr. Lavrov, assuming Azerbaijan's advocacy, has carried the argument further by stating that without Azerbaijan's consent, this move could prove to be "counterproductive," which is a veiled threat against Armenia. That means Russia is up to mischief to disrupt the stationing of the EU monitors. Sure enough, this veil fell apart last week, when Russia announced that it was moving the joint Turkish-Russian monitoring center in Shushi (now called Shusha) near Armenia's border in Azerbaijan.

We must remember that Russia's Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu in 2020 was bragging about this joint monitoring station as a "brilliant arrangement with Turkey."

Mr. Lavrov has grumbled over the fact that Armenia has see LAVROV, page 19





Possible Scenarios For Armenia

By Suren Sargsyan
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

In this article, I will present the best and worst possible scenarios for developments in the South Caucasus region and based on this, the reader will be able to independently analyze forthcoming developments.

The Realities

The South Caucasus has always been at the crossroads of conflicting interests. The region itself is tense because Iran, Turkey, Russia, Israel, U.S. and other players have interests to serve. As a result of the Artsakh war in 2020, a type of intermediate situation has formed here, which does not fully benefit any party involved. Turkey is not satisfied with the results of the 2020 war, because it was not able to be fully (including militarily) involved or deployed in the South Caucasus, as in Syria, Libya and other places. At the same time, it has not yet been able to implement its long-standing plan, the so-called “Zangezur Corridor.”

Russia is not satisfied, because its presence in the region as a peacekeeping mission is temporary with very unclear prospects. Only an incomplete part of Artsakh has appeared in Russia’s sphere of responsibility as Azerbaijan has occupied Shushi, Hadrut and Lachin Corridor. Apart from that, serious complaints arose in Armenia regarding Russia’s strategic partnership, undermining the reliability of its role as a strategic ally, which could lead to serious consequences.

Azerbaijan is not satisfied because it could not achieve the depopulation (dearmenification) and total occupation of Artsakh. Moreover, the presence of Russian peacekeepers in Artsakh has further complicated Azerbaijan’s plans. The interests of the anti-Iranian coalition are not satisfied, because there is no “Zangezur Corridor” that would cut off Iran from the external border with Armenia, and at the same time, it is not known who will ensure the security of that corridor if it ever become a reality. It is natural that Armenia is not satisfied either, because it lost not only Artsakh, but also a part of its sovereign territory. All this suggests that tensions in the region have not calmed down and there are still developments to come.

The Scenarios

The best scenario for Armenia would naturally be the establishment of peace in the neighborhood, but this has its price. In Armenia, there was the idea that Armenia would be able to develop in peaceful conditions after giving up Artsakh, which did not happen. Azerbaijan and Turkey put forth new preconditions and continued their aggressive policy towards Armenia. A definitely good scenarios for Armenia would be the settlement of relations between the West and Russia, which would also relieve the South Caucasus from high tensions. However, taking into account the events in Ukraine and the scale of anti-Russian sanctions, such a prospect is not expected in the near future.

Another positive development scenario would be the regulation of US-Iranian relations, which would give the opportunity to Armenia to develop economically and establish allied strategic relations with Iran, in order to face the Turkish-Azerbaijani tandem with joint efforts. In general, the Armenian-Iranian strategic partnership could balance the Turkish-Azerbaijani strategic partnership if the relations between Iran and the West were regulated. There are too many “if”s in these scenarios which means they are not realistic at this moment and developments are going in the opposite direction for now.

Challenges and Opportunities

In recent days, we have been following the tension between Azerbaijan and Iran, which was mainly aggravated by Baku’s actions and statements. It is obvious that Israel and Turkey will demand anti-Iranian measures from Azerbaijan, because it was with their undisguised help that Azerbaijan won the war in 2020. It is quite clear that in the case of such developments, Russia will have to get involved in the developments of the South Caucasus, having to open a new frontline in addition to the one with Ukraine. Russia is in a very difficult situation, and it will be extremely hard to fight on two fronts, so most probably Russia will try its best to relieve tension.

The same goes for Iran. Iran will do its best to solve the problem diplomatically, skillfully delaying its own unavoidable war. At the same time, it is necessary to mention that the strategy of Iran is to push the possible military campaign out of its territory to the neighboring country. It is a doctrinal principle for Iran. Turkey also has the same doctrine, to carry out possible military campaigns in the territory of another state. The best proof of this is Syria, Libya and other places where Turkey is involved.

These days, we see a more aggressive Azerbaijan and Turkey and a more cautious Iran. It is not difficult to understand where the military clashes will take place if they happen. But Iran’s caution and diplomacy, as well as Russia’s avoidance of opening a new frontline, will create a positive opportunity for Armenia to at least prepare for the worst possible scenarios.

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

COMMENTARY

Responsibility to Protect: To Prevent Another Armenian Genocide, Moscow, Washington and Paris Must Cooperate

By Suren Sargsyan
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

On February 1, US Secretary of State Blinken appointed Louis L. Bono Senior Advisor on the Caucasus Negotiations and made the following statement to the press: “The United States is committed to helping Armenia and Azerbaijan negotiate a comprehensive peace agreement, including a long-term political settlement to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Mr. Bono will engage bilaterally, with like minded partners, including the European Union, and with international organizations, such as the OSCE [Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe], to facilitate direct dialogue between Armenia and Azerbaijan.” Mr. Bono, as noted, will engage bilaterally with likeminded partners, including the European Union, and with international organizations, such as the OSCE, to facilitate direct dialogue between Armenia and Azerbaijan. However, the fact that the US avoided using the name of the OSCE Minsk Group is noteworthy.

We still remember those times when three superpowers, the United States, Russia and France, formed and effectively cooperated as co-chairs of the so-called Minsk Group of the OCSE, the aim of which was to support peace negotiations between Armenia and Azerbaijan over the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Despite the significant disagreements and contradictions that existed between the USA and France on the one hand and Russia on the other, this platform was a unique place where the three co-chairs adopted a common approach and had a unified position. The position was clear. The Nagorno-Karabakh issue can be solved based on the principles of non-use of force, territorial integrity, and self-determination of peoples. This situation continued to persist until the war in Nagorno-Karabakh in 2020, when the realities on the ground changed and the negotiation process was formally over.

As a result of the war unleashed by Azerbaijan supported by Turkey, which coincided with the presidential elections in the United States, a Russian peacekeeping mission was deployed in Nagorno-Karabakh, and still performs its duties without an international mandate but one received from Armenia and Azerbaijan only. Taking into account the new realities formed right after the war, the co-chairs did not even manage

to start adapting to the new situation when the Ukrainian war started and Russia-West relations and contacts were reduced to zero on both bilateral and multilateral levels. In other words, it turned out that the only format that could help Armenia and Azerbaijan negotiate, disappeared.

Taking advantage of this situation, Azerbaijan surrounds the 100,000 Armenian population of Nagorno-Karabakh and does not allow the opportunity to deliver medicine, food and basic necessities to the Armenian population there. By depriving them of natural gas and electricity, Aliyev’s regime condemned the Armenian population to starvation and cold, which could become another Armenian Genocide that we can witness before our eyes.

Now the roles of the superpowers are crucial, simply because these superpowers are forcing the small countries under their influence to choose one or another foreign political vector. These states or even regions are often considered the sphere of influence of a superpower and this status is usually challenged by the other superpower. The clash of superpowers is like a powerful earthquake, as a result of which massive collapses occur and small states appear from under the ruins. As a matter of fact, superpowers like the US, France (EU) and Russia have responsibilities towards international security and stability as they are the architects of the modern system of international security. Their enmity in one part of the world and the failure to cooperate in other parts of the world could cause a humanitarian catastrophe, just like the one happening in Nagorno-Karabakh. The responsibility of these superpowers towards small nations is undeniable and they simply cannot avoid their leadership in that regard.

Whether we like it or not, it is the responsibility of the superpowers to pay attention to the problems that have arisen as a result of advancing their geopolitical interests and, in that regard, they have to cooperate despite disagreements, hostility or mistrust.

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

LETTERS

Be Not a Witness but a Fighter in the Battle

To the Editor:

The suffering and deprivation in Artsakh, ongoing and worsening since December 12th, now appears to be one nail in the strategic coffin prepared by Armenia’s growing enemies. Disturbing hate crimes against Armenians in Jerusalem and posted calls for genocide in California cannot be dismissed as isolated radical incidents while Israeli media broadcasts inflammatory lies against Armenians, promoting Azerbaijan.

Do Armenians need to study the Ten Stages of Genocide to see where this dark wind blows? Overt warnings and threats loom overhead while complacency and indifference further enable the enemy. We must support and participate in the hard work of ANCA, AYPF, ARF and others. But there’s a greater call upon us. The pride we hold as the first Christian Nation is becoming a shame as churches stand nearly empty every Sunday, filling up only for social events, bazaars, or self-help groups. Churches plan their fundraising but neglect the spiritual mandate of servant and soldier of the Gospel. While the spirit of Islam gains momentum, where’s the Spirit of Christ in us?

The Armenian Genocide testifies the Gospel

truth that enemies arise and persecute believers. There’s a call to martyrdom, but also a call to stand in the battle, to pray through as the Body of Christ for victory. We need bold pulpits, calling folks to the Lord and repentance, teaching them to pray and stand strong to believe God’s word. If not now, when?

We cannot survive on church frivolities; they are no threat to our enemies nor to the spiritual darkness that propels them. God is most glorified when called upon and trusted in the battle. I urge our church leadership, pastors, elders, and deacons to cry out to the Holy Spirit for His fire and power. Shut in with God to receive a word for your flock. With blockade and ethnic hatred already in force and pogroms on the horizon, we need radical faith. Get prayer meetings, even all-night prayer, for Artsakh on your church calendar. Let’s not be witnesses but fighters in the battle. Hayer Miatsek! May God set our hearts aflame with faith and raise up Artsakh as a light and beacon before her enemies.

Lisa Stepanian
New York, NY



COMMENTARY

MY TURN



by Harut Sassounian

Israeli TV Station Airs Propaganda on Azerbaijan-Israel Military Relations: Part II

This is the second and final part of a series which began with “Israeli TV Spews Repulsive Azerii Propaganda Against Armenia & Iran” in the February 2 edition of *The California Courier*.

Israel’s international TV station, i24NEWS, aired on January 27 a program that sang the praises of Azerbaijan-Israel military relations and denigrated Armenia and Iran. Last week, we published part 1 of the program. Here is the second and final part. My comments are in brackets:

Henrique Cymerman, an Israeli journalist, narrated the program: “Military relations between Azerbaijan and Israel are getting closer by the minute. Between 2016 and 2020, 69 percent of Baku’s weapons, drones and electronic systems were purchased from Israel. Almost one-fifth of Israeli war materials were exported and sent to President Aliyev’s country. Roman Gurevich is an Israeli political analyst born in Baku. He focuses on relations between the two countries: ‘In the State of Israel, we are taking 40 percent of our fuels from Azerbaijan. Azerbaijan uses our technology and we have very important strategic issues in common.’ At the beginning of the 20th Century, Baku was already the world capital of oil production. A century ago, half of the world’s oil was produced in Azerbaijan. In addition, during the Communist era in the 1930’s, the dictator Joseph Stalin decided to increase production to the maximum level. After the break of the Second World War, Hitler’s birthday cake did not leave room for doubt [‘Caspian Sea’ was written on his cake]. The goal: to conquer the Caspian Sea, and the cherry on the cake, the City of Baku. The Nazis didn’t succeed. That also contributed to the victory of the allies, since 75 percent of all the oil of the Red Army during the war was from Azerbaijan.”

The Israeli journalist continued: “Baku’s government claims its coalition with Israel is not directed against anyone. But for the regime of the Ayatollah, it is very hard to see how a country with a Muslim majority, and totally Shia, maintains such deep ties with the Jewish State, Iran’s most hated enemy.” Former Israeli Minister Efraim Sneh added: “We are in favor of a strong independent, secular Azerbaijan. And this is the basis of why we are together. In that way, this is very important: oil from Azerbaijan to Israel, defense equipment from us to them. Very important. And we are more involved, people to people, cultural relations. But the basis is energy and defense.”

The narrator then said: “The first President of Azerbaijan Heydar Aliyev [Heydar was not the first President], father of the current president, decided on his alliance with Israel which remains to this day, and has Tehran as a common rival. In 2016, Israeli arms sales were estimated to be worth \$2.85 billion. President Aliyev decided that the former Soviet Republic would become the first Shiite Muslim state to open a diplomatic mission in Israel. In recent weeks, Baku’s Secret Services have managed to dismantle an Iranian spy network in the capital. Three agents from Tehran received information from several local citizens with whom they met with a clandestine phone. The Iranian side regularly paid for their services. Azerbaijan’s Security Services claimed that the ultimate goal of this network is to radicalize the country and contribute to the creation of an Islamic State, following the model of the Ayatollah. The

President of Azerbaijan declared that religion is like an iceberg—much of it is hidden under water.” Gurevich added: “The second war took place two years ago in 2020 after Armenian soldiers killed two senior officers of the Azerbaijani army [11th lie]. The result is that Azerbaijan reacted and liberated almost all of the occupied territories. When Armenians occupied Azerbaijan, the Iranians didn’t threaten Armenia. They chose to threaten Azerbaijan now [12th lie], after liberating the territory. It’s a very strange thing and a very strange alliance. ...Azerbaijan is stronger after this victory with the rapprochement between Israel and Turkey. Iranians are under pressure. Instead of building good ties between neighbors, Iran is creating problems for the whole world.”

The narrator continued: “In the destroyed areas of Karabagh, the Baku government is trying to resettle thousands of refugees. That’s why they are building the first smart cities which are still pilot projects. Refugees resulting from the war with Armenia are settled in areas that were completely destroyed. One of the problems is that the border areas are completely mined. Special army units and civilian companies try to clear the land from booby-traps, but this is a never-ending job....”

The narrator concluded: “The two armed conflicts between Azerbaijan and Armenia exist in a delicate ceasefire. And there are those who say that there aren’t two without a third. But this tense situation is further complicated by Iran’s nuclear race which is closer than ever to having enough uranium to build a nuclear bomb. For Iran to have Israeli agents on its border as allies of Azerbaijan is like having a knife to its throat. On the other hand, the Jewish State will do anything to prevent the Ayatollahs from carrying out their apocalyptic threats. It is like a three-person billiard game, if not more.”

The documentary ended here. The narrator, Israel journalist Henrique Cymerman, was then interviewed live on the Israeli channel. Cymerman said: “I think that Iran is really the reason for this alliance between Israel and Azerbaijan, which is huge. It’s really important. It’s strategic for both countries. I think this opening of [Azerbaijan’s] Embassy [in Israel] is the result of a very long process. It’s also a way of saying to Tehran, ‘guys, we have a new ally. We have a new friend in the last years, but we want to go all the way....’ And in a way, it’s a message for the Iranians, but it’s also a way of saying to Israel that they want more. They want more relations. I think they improved their strategic situation in their area of the world which is quite problematic. I was in the 700 hundred kilometers of the border between Azerbaijan and Iran, and I saw many things on the Iranian side. There were exercises and maneuvers — I tell about in the report — that are quite threatening for Azerbaijan. So they want Israel as a friend. And that’s exactly what’s happening now.”

When asked if Azerbaijan is concerned about the “powerful enemy, Iran,” Cymerman replied: “Absolutely. They are very concerned. And I think there were also these two wars they had against Armenia in the last 30 years that contributed to this alliance with Israel. Because 30 years ago they had a war when the Russians supported the Armenians [13th lie], and they lost. They lost 20 percent of their territory [it was much less than 20 percent], which is incredible, because it’s like 10,000 square kilometers, it’s like the Lebanese territory—half of Israel. So they lost it and one million Azeri people [it was much less than a million], they say, became refugees. So, now two years ago, in the second Karabagh War, they won because of Israeli technology. I think the Israeli military technology helped them to defeat their enemies, in this case, Armenia. But they also have the Iranian threat. So, they sent a message to Iran saying, ‘now we have new technologies, we have Israel.’ The Azeri President even had an Israeli drone in the picture. In a way, it’s a kind of psychological war, showing that this alliance is really deep and important. They mean business in this relation with Israel.”

Sergei Lavrov Justifies Azerbaijan’s War against Armenia

LAVROV, from page 17

refused to invite within its borders the Trojan horse that he had offered. He has said that CSTO is ready to send its monitors, “even within days, but our Armenian colleagues preferred to invite EU monitors.”

Russia would prefer to maintain Armenian-Azerbaijani relations under its control to keep the crisis percolating, in perpetual need of a stabilizer.

The EU monitors are security assets for Armenia to gave it some breathing room to recover from the devastation of war. But Russia perceives the move differently and accuses Armenia of inviting Western forces into the Caucasus region to push out Russia from its zone of influence. Armenia’s intent certainly is not that, but its very urgent defense against the existential threat that it faces.

Mr. Lavrov, unable to defend his country’s catastrophic failure to defend its allies, has thrown the most potent political bomb in his arsenal by justifying Azerbaijan’s criminal actions and turning realities upside down. What makes this betrayal even more painful for Armenia and the Armenian nation worldwide is that Lavrov himself is of Armenian extraction.

Indeed, on February 2, Mr. Lavrov gave an interview to Dmitri Kisselev on Rossya 24 and among other things, he stated, “For many years, Armenia occupied seven regions of Azerbaijan. Russia offered numerous options for a dip-

lomatic solution. But the Armenian leadership wanted to keep the territories. Azerbaijan, exasperated, took back the lands that belong to it,” he said.

“Now, the parties have signed an agreement on their readiness to conclude a peace agreement on the basis of the 1991 Almaty Declaration. It states that the borders of independent states will run along the borders of the Union Republics. Karabakh was part of the Azerbaijan SSR.”

As a skilled diplomat Mr. Lavrov is entitled to lie to his heart’s content, but he cannot turn history upside down and shy away from Russia’s obligations:

- Russia was obligated to prevent the 44-Day War and not to ask for gratitude from Armenia for stopping it.
- Russia betrayed Armenia by supplying it with faulty armaments and refusing to deploy the air defense system.
- “Russia offered numerous options for a solution. But the Armenian leadership wanted to keep the territories.” This statement defies the facts because Russia encouraged Armenian leaders to continue to hold those territories as a bargaining chip in Kremlin’s hand against Azerbaijan. A case in point is that in 2012, Armenia was negotiating a deal with the EU but then Premier Serge Sargsyan’s arm was twisted, and overnight, he turned the tide and Armenia abandoned the EU to opt for CSTO. Therefore, Moscow had the power to impose any solution it desired.
- Russia has subscribed to the principles of the Orga-

nization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), which are based on three elements: The refusal to solve conflicts through the use of forces, maintain territorial integrity of nations and the minority’s rights for self-determination. By justifying Azerbaijan’s armed aggression against Armenia, Mr. Lavrov’s tramples the first of the OSCE principles.

• “Karabakh was part of the Azerbaijan SSR” is a mis-statement because Karabakh was an autonomous region placed arbitrarily under Azerbaijan’s tutelage by Stalin, against the will of the population. Then Karabakh used the same constitutional mechanism as Azerbaijan to cede from the Soviet Union.

Armenians traditionally have proven to be a pro-Russian people. The recent change in public sentiment is the direct result of Russian actions, not necessarily the result of efforts from the West.

It is obvious that at the present time, Armenia and Russia are on a collision course. Armenia cannot push its luck too far, because Russia has the means and the will to react.

Just last week, a very articulate diplomat, Armen Kharyan, promoting pro-Western policy for Armenia, mysteriously died. Speculations indicate that this is the beginning of things to come.

Prudence and caution are most valuable political assets at this time.

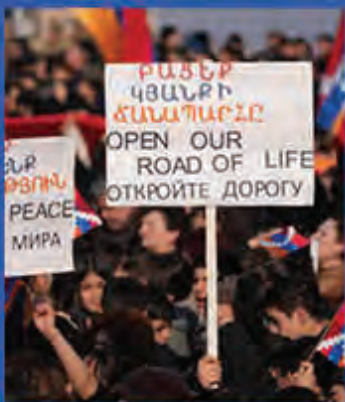


COMMENTARY



Tekeyan Cultural Association Launches ARTSAKH CRISIS AID CAMPAIGN

The Armenians of Artsakh have been suffering direly due to the Azerbaijani blockade since December 12 and have asked for our aid, but we hesitate.



How Much
Longer Must
the People
of Artsakh
Suffer?

Due to the blockade, sending supplies is physically impossible, but there still is a way to help. The Tekeyan Cultural Association of USA and Canada has reached an agreement with the Artsakh government to send money directly into the bank accounts of families with children to allow them to purchase much needed life-sustaining supplies.

TCA immediately sent an initial \$10,300. Another \$10,090 was raised from donations and sent at the start of February. So far, 212 families have been helped through TCA, and its fundraising campaign continues.

**LIVES, AND THE VERY FUTURE OF
ARTSAKH AND ARMENIA ARE AT STAKE**

Please donate as much as you can online at <https://givebutter.com/YCrT8P> or mail checks made out to the Tekeyan Cultural Association, Memo: Artsakh Aid, to Tekeyan Cultural Association, 755 Mount Auburn Street, Watertown, MA 02472.

For more information, email tcadirector@aol.com.

Yerevan Reports More Contacts On Peace Treaty With Baku

BERLIN (Azatutyun) — Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan said on February 7 that Armenia and Azerbaijan have continued to exchange proposals regarding a bilateral peace treaty despite what he described as Azerbaijani efforts to depopulate Nagorno-Karabakh.

Visiting Germany, Mirzoyan said Yerevan communicated “new proposals” to Baku even after he canceled in December a planned trilateral meeting with his Azerbaijani and Russian counterparts in protest against the Azerbaijani blockade of the Lachin corridor.

“I should also inform you that a few days ago we received another response and proposals from Azerbaijan,” he told a joint news conference with German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock. “Again, this is an ongoing process, and we continue to work on the text, exchanging proposals and continuing the discussion in different, several stages.”

“It is very important to understand that

even though the Lachin corridor is blocked and all other challenges remain, essentially the negotiation process is not at a standstill. “Negotiations are continuing,” he said.

Mirzoyan did not shed light on those proposals. Nor did he say if he could now agree to meet with Russia’s Sergei Lavrov and Azerbaijan’s Jeyhun Bayramov.

In a phone call with Bayramov last week, Lavrov said he is still ready to organize the trilateral talks in Moscow. They would focus on the Armenian-Azerbaijani peace treaty, he said.

Azerbaijani leaders have said all along that the treaty must be based on key elements which it presented to Yerevan in March 2022. Those include mutual recognition of each other’s territorial integrity. This would presumably mean Armenian recognition of Azerbaijani sovereignty over Karabakh.

Mirzoyan said in early December that the conflicting sides are “still far apart on many issues” relating to the peace agreement.

Armenian MP Insists on International Recognition Of Artsakh People’s Right to Self-determination

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) — Armenian opposition MP Tigran Abrahamyan welcomes the statement unanimously adopted by the Artsakh parliament on February 6 in response to the recent claims of some pro-government MPs in Armenia.

It said their statements “cast doubt on the significance of the Artsakh national liberation struggle and the Artsakh people’s right to self-determination, splitting the nation.”

“Strongly condemning such dangerous behavior, all factions of the Artsakh Republic National Assembly express confidence that such statements not only do not stem from the interests of the Armenian people, but also draw water to the mill of the Turkish-Azerbaijani tandem,” reads the statement.

“Welcoming the Artsakh parliament’s prompt response, I believe the statements of the ruling party members put Armenia and Artsakh at greater risk and contribute to the legitimization of Azerbaijan’s ag-

gression,” Abrahamyan, who represents the opposition Pativ Unem bloc, wrote on [Facebook](#) on February 7.

He stressed all activities and statements of his faction, which comprises the former ruling Republican Party of Armenia (RPA) are based on the ideas and principles underlying the Artsakh struggle, putting the realization of the principle of self-determination and international recognition at the core of Artsakh peace talks.

“Highlighting the active and effective cooperation with the Artsakh parliament and its factions, I reiterate that our political force, the Republican Party of Armenia, has done and will do its best to help our fellow Artsakh citizens live in peace and security in their homes, as well as master their own destiny,” the deputy said.

“The Artsakh people’s right to self-determination must be exercised and recognized internationally; the alternative is the exodus of Armenians from Artsakh and physical threats,” he stressed.

Soldiers Died in Fire in Different Parts of Barracks

YEREVAN (News.am) — The bodies of the 14 of the 15 Armenian soldiers who died as a result of a fire in their military accommodations were found in different parts of a bedroom, and the body of one soldier was found in the lobby of the accommodation, in front of the entrance to the bedroom, said Arshak Martirosyan, the head of the supervision department of the Central Military Prosecutor’s Office on Public Television on February 6.

According to him, the scenario given by Arsen Saroyan, a representative of the Rescue Service, voiced on Public Television, that the bodies of all servicemen were on the beds, was dismissed by the evidence.

Also, the prosecutor’s office is looking into the claims of the relatives of the dead servicemen that there were tense relations between Captain Yeghishe Hakobyan and the soldiers. According to Hovsep Sargsyan, Hakobyan’s defense attorney, Hakobyan did not live in that accommodations.

At around 1:30 a.m. on January 19, a fire broke out in the accommodation of the engineering-sapper platoon of the military

unit located in the territory of Azat village in Gegharkunik Province. Fifteen servicemen died as a result and seven were injured. Four of them were discharged from the Vardenis town hospital after receiving medical treatment, whereas three others with severe burns were transported to National Center of Burns and Dermatology in Yerevan.

A few hours after the incident, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan said that an officer had poured gasoline in the stove of the accommodation. When he caught on fire, he had thrown the 5-liter can of gasoline in his hand towards the accommodation, and this had caused the fire.

But later, the platoon commander told reporters that there was no gasoline in the accommodation.

Criminal proceedings have been launched into this incident along the lines of which there are two defendants: the head of the utility operation service of the aforesaid military unit, as well as the head of the rear of the military unit and the latter’s the deputy commander in charge of rear and utility operation service. They are in custody.