



Armenian Political Leader, Editor and Writer Edmond Y. Azadian Passes

SOUTHFIELD, Mich. — It is with profound sorrow that the Central Board of the Tekeyan Cultural Association (TCA) of the United States and Canada and the Armenian Democratic Liberal Party Supreme Council announce the news of the passing of Edmond Y. Azadian, one of the most prominent figures in Armenian life for more than half a century, on March 25 in Jupiter, Florida, following a brief illness.

A funeral service will take place on Saturday, April 22, at St. John Armenian Church of Southfield, Mich. (22001 Northwestern Hwy.), with visitations the prior evening. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made out to the TCA Edmond Y. Azadian Publications Fund.

Early Life and Work

Edmond Yervant Azadian was one of the most influential political and cultural leaders of the Armenian world for many decades. A journalist, editor, executive and activist, most recently he served as president of the Central Board of the Tekeyan Cultural Association of the United States and Canada and a leader over several decades of the Armenian Democratic Liberal Party (ADL).

Born on May 13, 1935 in Rayak, Lebanon, to parents from Adana, with the surname Godalazian, his family moved to Beirut, where he studied at the Sourp Krikor Lusavorich School of the Jesuit fathers and then developed a solid background in Armenian language and literature during secondary school at the Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU) Hovagimian-Manoogian School.

He received his bachelor’s degree in Business Administration from the American University of Beirut. In further pursuit of a literary career, he studied English and American literature at Northeastern University in Boston, and Near Eastern languages and history at Wayne State University, in Detroit, Mich.

Five years after moving to the US, in 1972, he began his long work connection with businessman and philanthropist Alex Manoogian, president of the AGBU Central Board of Directors, as his personal secretary. He served many years as an executive administrator at the Alex and Marie Manoogian Cultural Fund, through which many Armenian books were published and Armenian newspapers and cultural activities supported.

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Zareh Sinanyan Promotes Diaspora Commission Programs in Boston

By Aram Arkun
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

WATERTOWN — High Commissioner for Diaspora Affairs of the Republic of Armenia Zareh Sinanyan gave a presentation on the activities and goals of his office to a group of Armenian community leaders of Boston at the New England Armenian General Benevolent Union headquarters in Watertown on February 24. This was part of a series of visits to US cities which also included Dallas, Houston, New York City, Fairlawn, Paramus, Philadelphia and Providence.

Sinanyan was accompanied from his office by Anaïs Astarjian, who serves as US community liaison and is originally from the Boston area. Unlike earlier visits to the US, such as to Los Angeles in June 2022, his current East Coast tour was not ac-



Zareh Sinanyan (photo Aram Arkun)



Some of the participants in the Boston meeting with Zareh Sinanyan (center)

companied by protests organized primarily by the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF). In fact, a number of representatives of this political party and its auxiliary organizations politely participated in the meeting.

Presentation on Programs

The formal part of the meeting was a presentation with slides by Sinanyan on the various programs of the Office of the High Commissioner, which was created in June 2019. During the meeting, he proclaimed that it has been working on building a strong relationship with the Armenian diaspora in four directions. He

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Azerbaijan ‘Breaches Line Of Contact’ Seizing Positions In Nagorno-Karabakh

By Ani Avetisyan and Ismi Aghayev

Azerbaijani forces have crossed the line of contact in Nagorno-Karabakh, purportedly in response to the construction of a new road.

On the evening of Saturday, March 25, the Azerbaijani Defense Ministry announced they were taking “urgent measures” to prevent the alleged construction of a road to bypass the Lachin corridor.

The corridor, the only connection between Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenia, has been under blockade near Shusha (Shushi) since December.



Footage released by Azerbaijan claimed to show the construction of an alternative route to the Lachin Corridor.

There were no reports of clashes or casualties.

The Russian Defense Ministry said Azerbaijani troops had “breached” the line of contact in violation of the November 9 ceasefire agreement, which brought an end to the Second Nagorno-Karabakh War. They said Azerbaijani forces had taken up new positions near Shusha.

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Russia Issues Stern Warning to Armenia

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — Russia on Monday, March 27, bluntly warned Armenia against ratifying the founding treaty of the International Criminal Court (ICC) following the “illegal” arrest warrant issued by it for Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Moscow has notified Yerevan that such a move would have “extremely negative” consequences for Russian-Armenian relations, a Russian diplomatic source told the official TASS and RIA Novosti news agencies.

“Moscow considers absolutely unacceptable official Yerevan’s plans to join the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court against the backdrop of the recent illegal and legally void ‘warrants’ of the ICC against the Russian leadership,” said the unnamed source.

The unusually stern warning came three days after Armenia’s Constitutional Court paved the way for parliamentary ratification of the treaty signed by a former Armenian government in 2004. The court ruled that the Rome Statute conforms to the Armenian constitution.

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan’s government has not yet clarified whether it will now send the treaty to the Armenian parliament for ratification. Armenian law gives it up to three months to make such a decision.

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YEREVAN
An Engineering City in Armenia



ISRAEL
Armenian Genocide Square Inaugurated in Haifa



NEW YORK
Naghash Ensemble Lights Up Carnegie Hall





ARMENIA

NEWS from ARMENIA

Army Barracks for Women Being Built

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — Minister of Defense Suren Papikyan on March 25 visited a military base which will house the women's regiment and a boot camp for women troops.

The Armenian military had announced in January possible plans to introduce a new option of voluntary military service for women.

Babayan: Azerbaijan's Attempts to 'Suffocate' Karabakh Compounded by Int'l Inaction

STEPANAKERT (News.am) — Azerbaijan's attempts to completely "suffocate" Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh) are accompanied by the complete inaction of the international community, complained David Babayan, adviser and representative-at large of the Artsakh president, commenting on Azerbaijani attempts to advance in the Stepanakert-Lisagor section of Artsakh over the weekend.

"Azerbaijan is making new attempts to once again shock the population of Artsakh, create unbearable conditions. What Azerbaijan is doing is a gross violation of the [trilateral] statement of November 9, 2020, a blow to Artsakh, and another blow to the Russian peacekeeping contingent [in Artsakh]. I believe the time has come for Russia and the international community to take proper steps—at least politically. Azerbaijan's actions are a clear violation of all possible norms of law," said Babayan on March 28.

He emphasized that amid all this, another "honeymoon" is taking place between some European countries and Azerbaijan.

"This is the case when an actual [Armenian] genocide is being carried out [by Azerbaijan] in Artsakh. Those European countries have turned moral values into a price," he concluded.

Parliament Foreign Relations Chair Meets with Czech Counterpart

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — On March 27, the chair of the National Assembly Standing Committee on Foreign Relations, Sargis Khandanyan, met with the Director General for European Issues of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic Jaroslav Kurfürst.

Khandanyan noted that this year marked the 30th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Armenia and the Czech Republic. According to him, during the past three decades, inter-state warm relations have developed and at present, Armenia is ready to deepen its cooperation in all possible spheres with the Czech Republic.

He praised cooperation with the Czech Republic on the bilateral, as well as multilateral platforms, in the European Union and multilateral formats, including the United Nations, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Council of Europe and other formats.

US Concerned About Azeri 'Military Movements' in Karabakh

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — The United States has expressed concern about Azerbaijan's weekend "military movements" that further tightened its blockade of Nagorno-Karabakh's land link with Armenia.

Azerbaijani troops seized on Saturday a hill overlooking a dirt road that bypasses a section of the Lachin corridor blocked by Baku for more than three months.

Karen Donfried, the outgoing US assistant secretary of state for Europe and Eurasia, appeared to have discussed the development with Azerbaijani Foreign Minister Jeyhun Bayramov in a phone call on Monday, March 27. The US State Department said she "expressed concern over Azerbaijani military movements."

The Azerbaijani military claimed that it took "necessary measures" to stop Armenia's arms supplies to Karabakh.

The Armenian government and Karabakh's leadership have flatly denied such supplies repeatedly alleged by Baku in recent weeks. They say that the Azerbaijani advance in Karabakh constitutes a serious breach of the Russian-brokered that stopped the 2020 war.

The Russian Defense Ministry also ac-

cused Azerbaijan of violating the ceasefire. It said later on Saturday that Russian peacekeepers demanded that the Azerbaijani troops return to "their previously occupied positions." Baku has ignored the demand so far.

A State Department spokesman, Vedant



Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs Karen Donfried

Patel, said Donfried also reaffirmed Washington's "commitment to Armenia-Azer-

baijan peace negotiations" and called for "direct dialogue" between the conflicting parties.

"There is not a military solution to this conflict," Patel told a news briefing in Washington.

According to the Azerbaijani readout of the phone call, Bayramov accused Armenia of adopting an "unconstructive position" in ongoing negotiations on an Armenian-Azerbaijani peace treaty.

The United States has repeatedly called on the Azerbaijani side to lift the blockade that has caused a serious humanitarian crisis in Karabakh. The US ambassador to Armenia, Kristina Kvien, made a point of visiting an Armenian border checkpoint leading to the Lachin corridor earlier this month. Another senior US diplomat made it clear, however, that Wash-

ington is not considering imposing sanctions on Baku because of the blockade.

Echmiadzin Statement on 100th Day of Artsakh Blockade

The Armenian world passed a grim milestone on March 21, 2023: the 100th day of the cruel blockade of the Lachin Corridor, effectively stifling travel and commerce between Artsakh and Armenia.

In recognition of the occasion, the Supreme Spiritual Council, under the Presidency of Karekin II, Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians, issued a statement. What follows is an English translation.

With deep sadness, we state it is already the 100th day that the authorities of Azerbaijan, with the intensifying manifestations of anti-Armenian policy, have blocked the Berdzor (Lachin) corridor connecting Artsakh to Armenia.

The physical and psychological pressures, violence and terrorist acts carried out regularly by Azerbaijan against the Armenian population of the Republic of Artsakh deepen the catastrophic humanitarian situation. Contrary to the efforts of the peacekeeping personnel stationed in Artsakh, as a result of the criminal actions of the Azerbaijani authorities, people's—children, women and elderly—rights to life, treatment, movement and other fundamen-

tal rights are being violated.

We highly appreciate the decision of the International Court of Justice of the United Nations regarding the removal of the blockade of the Berdzor (Lachin) corridor by Azerbaijan. We welcome the urge of the Assembly of the European Parliament urging the authorities of Azerbaijan to implement the decision of the International Court of Justice of the United Nations.

We express our confusion that despite the strong demands of the international community and its competent and influential structures to open the road, the blockade continues to this day. We urge the structures of the UN, the European Parliament and the European Union, heads of state and religious leaders, to achieve the execution of the judgment of the International Court by Azerbaijan with consistent efforts and ensure the safe and normal life of the Artsakh population.

Toleration of such a blatantly disrespectful approach by Azerbaijan to the decision of the International Court of Justice will intensify the humanitarian crisis, will create new dangers for the lives of more than 120,000 people of Artsakh, will create an unforgivable precedent of grossly cir-

cumventing the resolution of international courts, at the same time causing a deep disillusionment with international justice.

Our Holy Apostolic Church, having priority over the salvation and safety of human lives, will consistently protect the realization of the right of self-determination of the people of Artsakh, based on the principle of independence for the sake of salvation and safety.

*Issued by the Supreme Spiritual Council
Holy Echmiadzin / 21 March, 2023*

Russia Issues Stern Warning to Armenia

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The government had asked the Constitutional Court to pass judgment on the ICC treaty in December after indicating plans to appeal to The Hague tribunal over Azerbaijan's military attacks on Armenian territory launched since May 2021.

Some opposition figures in Yerevan have linked the court ruling to the ICC's recent decision to issue the arrest warrant for Putin over war crimes allegedly committed by Russia in Ukraine. They claim that Pashinyan wants to score points among the Western powers amid unprecedented friction between Moscow and Yerevan.

Russian-Armenian relations have deteriorated in recent months because of what the Armenian government sees as a lack of Russian support in the conflict with Azerbaijan.

Legal experts believe that recognition of the ICC's jurisdiction would commit Yerevan to arresting Putin in case of his visit to Armenia.

Earlier this week, a Russian law-enforcement agency opened a criminal case against an ICC prosecutor and judges who issued the "illegal" arrest warrant.

Azerbaijani Troops Accused of Shooting At Karabakh Farmers

YEREVAN (Public Radio of Armenia) — Azerbaijani forces fired at civilians working in the pomegranate garden in Martakert, the Police of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan reported.

The report states that at 11:30 a.m. on March 27, Alyosha Zakaryan, the chief specialist of the Martakert region of the Artsakh Republic's State Inspections Management Committee, reported to the regional police department that March 26, the enemy targeted them in the administrative area of Martakert city. about firing

erratically.

The police officers found out that on the same day around 11:30 a.m., while doing agricultural work in the pomegranate orchard belonging to the State Inspections Management Committee in the administrative area of Martakert city, Azerbaijani combat positions fired irregular shots from rifle weapons at the workers.

No one was hurt. Agricultural work was stopped. The police passed the information on to the Russian peacekeeping troops.

Earlier, on March 23, Azerbaijani snipers killed an Armenian soldier.



ARMENIA

An Engineering City in Armenia

By Joseph Dagdigian

YEREVAN — Engineering City, a high-tech incubator, was established in 2018 as a public-private partnership by Armenia's Engineering Association — an association comprising representatives of the World Bank, the Government of Armenia and private companies. It is a high-tech engineering complex situated on 3 hectares of land at 21/1 Bagrevand St. in Yerevan's Nor Nork district. Its purpose is to facilitate the development of a high-tech industrial base in Armenia, develop products for both domestic and export markets, and to foster high-tech manufacturing. Facilities include engineering offices, laboratories, a library, a modern cafeteria, shared manufacturing and test facilities, lecture halls, and classrooms. Qualified companies, both domestic and foreign, either startups or existing companies, can qualify for office and lab space.

Resident companies are focused on automotive electronics, biomedical equipment, robotics, semiconductors, analog and digital electronics, high-frequency microwaves, instrumentation, aerospace systems, and science education products. Engineering City's goal is to provide an infrastructure allowing companies to rapidly develop and manufacture high-quality, state of the art products for international markets. Companies I have visited expressed confidence, and in many cases have already demonstrated, their ability to meet these goals.

Engineering and manufacturing are essential to Armenia. It is estimated that between Engineering City, and a proposed Factory City, there is the potential to create

frequency antennas.

The company is ISO 9001 certified, assuring customers that it complies with international quality standards. More information is available at <https://yeae.am>.

VAN, EVAN Technologies: Ten years ago, Hagop Gevorgyan started VAN technologies as one of the first companies to lo-



EVAN founder Hagop Gevorgyan with vehicle chargers

cate at Engineering City. Utilizing products from National Instruments, a Texas based company with a strong presence at Engineering City, VAN technologies applies its expertise in mechanical, electrical, and software engineering to develop automation systems for international clients. They also market training kits allowing customers to familiarize themselves with various

neering City. With 15 employees (4 with PhDs) with expertise in analog and digital electronics, analog controllers, and radio physics, the company produces automatic testing systems. They also manufacture educational kits for schools and universities. Exports are to 15 countries in Europe, the CIS, the Middle East and China. Exports

from a go-fund-me appeal, with additional support from friends. Oqni, in cooperation with students from the TUMO center, and a bio engineering group at the University of Michigan, began developing a bionic leg which, when completed, will be the first to be made in Armenia. She said, "We didn't know how to do this, but we learned." Oqni's web site is at <https://www.oqni.org/>

Armbionics: "Transcending Disabilities, Transcending Boundaries" are the bywords of Armbionics, founded by Doctors Marina Davtyan and Lucine Hovhannisyan. Armbionics provides arm prosthetics together with "physical and psychosocial assistance". Training on the performance of everyday tasks, such as sports and playing musical instruments, is offered. Two types of prosthetic hands are made. Mechanical hands grasp and release objects by moving the elbow and wrist. Myoelectric hands operate by sensing electric signals from sensors on the muscles. More details are at <https://www.armbionics.am>.

Mechanical Engineering/Manufacturing Services: The mechanical engineering group comes from Yerevan, the villages of Garni and Hraztan, and from Lebanon. Some of the staff are mechanical engineering students at the on-site branch of the National Polytechnic University of Armenia (Polytechnic for short). I was shown an injection mold for complex plastic parts for one of companies at Engineering City. The mold, consisting of 120 precision machined parts, was produced in 3 months. The most critical parts are machined to a tolerance of 5 microns (+/- .0002 inches).

Education: An on-site branch of the National Polytechnic University of Armenia offers 4-year Bachelor of Science degrees to graduates, combining traditional engineering courses with industry related projects. Focus is on Instrumentation and Measurement, Radio Devices and Systems, and Industrial Systems and Engineering. "After hour" evening courses are also offered. A placement office helps graduates find jobs after graduation. Professors from the Polytechnic campus in central Yerevan, as well as PhD candidates, advanced students, and staff from Engineering City companies teach courses.

Dr. Andranik Aghajanyan, who heads Education at Engineering City, indicated that much of the staff serves on a volunteer basis. Funding is needed for more full-time instructors and laboratory equipment. Some student scholarships are available but others must find the means to pay for their tuition. A Master's program is being planned with specialties in aerospace, electric vehicles, and self-driving vehicles. Help from industry specialists as well as professional academic advisors, and trainers would be beneficial. "This can't be done with traditional educational methods", stated Aghajanyan. For more information contact ec@polytechnic.am or visit <http://ecpolytech.am/en/>.

Support for Engineering City: If it makes financial and business sense, consider utilizing some of the products or services offered at Engineering City, or establish a presence there for your company. Visiting lecturers are welcome. Contributions to student scholarships will certainly help as would donations of equipment and financial support. For information and contacts visit <https://engineeringcity.am>.

A goal is to establish a Factory City@ Engineering City where the designs of sophisticated products will seamlessly and rapidly transition to high-quality manufacturing for the export market.



YEAE Director of Engineering Gurgen Maroyan

over 10,000 jobs. As has recently become evident, Armenia's economic well-being and security depend on utilizing its scientific, engineering, and manufacturing talent. During the Soviet era, Armenia was a high-tech engineering and manufacturing center. Armenia has the talent; it can become a high-tech center again.

YEA Engineering (YEAE): YEAE provides complex engineering solutions and contract manufacturing for customers. Major products include test systems which evaluate the performance of electronic control units (ECUs) for electric and autonomous vehicles. These systems evaluate the vehicle's sensors, radars, antennas, cameras, battery management units, and charging systems. YEA's test systems are exported to customers in the U.S., France, and Switzerland. YEAE also produces test equipment for high power semiconductors, data communication equipment, and high

electronic and mechanical technologies.

Approximately 3 years ago, wanting to make a contribution to clean technology, Gevorgyan established EVAN technologies to produce electric vehicle chargers. Products range from home chargers to charging stations incorporating WIFI, allowing individual chargers to be remotely managed. The chargers automatically sense the appropriate charging method for each vehicle, and ascertain details about the vehicle's battery. Gevorgyan indicated that exporting chargers to other countries is not a problem. EVAN is prepared to meet all applicable U.S. specifications and regulations if and when chargers are shipped to the U.S. For detailed information please visit <https://e-evan.com/>.

Project Integration: Dr. Vardan Alexanyan founded Project Integration in 2011, before Engineering City existed. He subsequently moved his company to Engi-

to the U.S. are small but they would like to expand in this market. Dr. Alexanyan, like others, indicated that exporting products from Armenia is not a problem. He can be contacted at <https://am.linkedin.com/in/vardan-aleksanyan-6b92207>.

Integrator: Integrator company was founded 14 years ago. It produces educational and training systems for a number of engineering disciplines, including electromechanical devices such as various types of electric motors, generators, and machine control devices. Detailed educational manuals provide hands on experience and an opportunity to experiment with various types of equipment. Their products are used in over 60 universities around the world. Services include design of educational test equipment and consulting services. Integrator's web site is <http://integrator.am>, or they can be contacted via email at info@integrator.am.

Descriptions of educational laboratory equipment for home and schools may be examined at <http://lab-store.org/en>.

ISB: ISB is a Canadian manufacturer of industrial safety equipment, with operations both in Canada and in Armenia. Products are designed to meet European safety standards and are certified at testing facilities in Germany. ISB's web site is at <https://isblite.com>.

Oqni: Haikouhi, born in Armenia, lived in the U.S. and later in France where she was a clinical and forensic psychologist. In the aftermath of the Karabagh war, she moved to Armenia where her expertise was needed. Seeing the trauma caused by the loss of a lower limb, she applied her skills to help alleviate the psychological effects of such a loss. Most of her services were to wounded soldiers, many from rural areas where less care is available than in Yerevan. Prosthetic limbs helped, but there remained the stigma of a visible prosthetic. Haikouhi, with friends and colleagues, established Oqni (Armenian for "help") to manufacture customized coverings for prosthetic lower limbs. This turned out to be a great comfort to Oqni's clients. A bank of 3-D printers prints customized coverings which are then fitted to clients at no charge. When asked how this operation is funded, Haikouhi replied that funds were received

INTERNATIONAL

INTERNATIONAL

Canada FM Calls on Azerbaijan to Reopen Lachin Corridor

OTTAWA (News.am) — Melanie Joly, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Canada, on March 27 addressed the ongoing blockade of Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh) by Azerbaijan in the Canadian parliament, the Armenian National Committee of Canada reported.

The minister said that Canada continues to appeal to the Azerbaijani authorities to reopen the Lachin corridor and release all Armenian prisoners of war.

Joly stressed that it is necessary to prevent the further deterioration of the situation.

At the same time, she said that Canada is supporting the European Union monitoring mission near the Armenian-Azerbaijani border.

Pashinyan Appeals to Michel after Azerbaijan Aggression

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan held a phone call on March 25 with the President of the European Council Charles Michel to express concern over Azerbaijan's increasing aggressive rhetoric and provocative actions.

A readout released by the Prime Minister's Office said Pashinyan and Michel discussed "the ongoing crisis situation resulting from the illegal blockade of the Lachin Corridor by Azerbaijan."

They also exchanged views around the process of normalizing relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan, the peace treaty and the re-opening of regional connections.

"The Prime Minister expressed concern over the recent increasing aggressive rhetoric and provocative conduct by Azerbaijan, which impedes the efforts for stability and peace. The President of the European Council reaffirmed the EU's readiness to contribute to dialogue and peace in the region," Pashinyan's Office reported in the readout.

European Chess Championship: Susanna Gaboyan Wins in 9th Round

PETROVAC, Montenegro (Panorama.am) — The ninth round of the 23rd European Women Chess Championship was played on Monday, March 27, during which Susanna Gaboyan won, the Armenian Chess Federation said.

The games of Anna Sargsyan, Elina Danielian and Polina Kobak ended in a draw.

Anna Sargsyan scored 6.5 points out of 9. Elina Danielian - 6 points, Mariam Mkrtchyan and Lilit Mkrtchian - 5.5 points, Susanna Gaboyan - 5 points, Polina Kobak - 4 points.

The European Women Chess Championship is taking place at the Hotel Palas in Petrovac, Montenegro, on March 17-30. The event features 136 players from 34 federations.



Protestors outside the Israeli embassy in Berlin (Photos courtesy of Lilit Kocharyan, <https://www.facebook.com/am.Theophanu.de/photos>)

Activists Picket Israeli Embassy in Berlin For Arms Sales to Azerbaijan

By Muriel Mirak-Weissbach

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

BERLIN — "Israel, stop arming Azerbaijan's genocidal dictatorship!" With this call, two Berlin-based civil society groups held a vigil in front of the Israeli Embassy on March 26. Twenty people from the grassroots movement, Theophanu Club Germany, and the human rights organization, Against Genocide, for International Understanding (AGA), gathered to lodge their protest action, which was authorized by the local police. Pickets and banners they displayed sent out unambiguous statements: "Azerbaijan is holding Armenian civilians hostage", "Israeli drones are killing us", "Recognize Armenian genocide", "Stop energy cooperation with dictator in Azerbaijan", "Free Lachin corridor", "Azerbaijan invades Armenia while the world watches" and more.

In their call, the groups documented the involvement of Israel in arming Azerbaijan; 70% of its weapons imports have come from Israel since the 2016 war against Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh). Four years later, "Israeli drones and modern weapons played a decisive role in killing Armenians in Artsakh, in the victory and occupation of large areas." Israel has continued to arm Azerbaijan to the present day. Former Israeli Minister Efraim Sneh is quoted as having said, "We are for a strong, independent, secular Azerbaijan. And that is the basis for our cooperation. In this respect this is very important: oil from Azerbaijan to Israel, modern military equipment from us to them. Very important. And we are involved in other aspects, from person to person, in cultural relations. But the basis is energy and defense."

The protesters denounced Azerbaijan's repeated military incursions into Armenia since 2021, its occupation of border areas, and continuing threats. Most important is the blockade of the Lachin corridor and the humanitarian crisis it has created. In their announcement of the vigil, the organizers cited warnings issued by genocide scholars since August 2022, of the dangers posed to

Armenians in the South Caucasus by such policies.

That Israel should be providing military equipment to Baku has more than logistical implications. "Israel," the organizers write, "is among the few western states that up to the present day have not recognized and condemned the genocide against the Armenians. The Jewish and the Armenian people share the pain of the most devastating, largescale genocides of the 20th century. Unfortunately," the text continues, "this has not led the Israeli state to solidary with the descendants of the victims —



the Armenians in Artsakh and Armenia." It concludes with a call on Israel "to finally recognize the Armenian genocide" and to cease support of Azerbaijan, which is carrying out a policy of annihilation.

Parliament Speaker Visits Germany

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — The President of the National Assembly of Armenia Alen Simonyan met with the President of the Bundestag Bärbel Bas during a visit to Germany, on March 27.

A one-on-one meeting was followed by an enlarged meeting.

Noting the importance of multi-layered cooperation and mutual visits of lawmakers between the Armenian and German parliaments, the speakers attached importance to the stable development of the friendly relations between the two countries and strengthening of inter-parliamentary cooperation, the parliament's press service said in a readout.

Simonyan said that Armenia attaches great importance to the implementation of the EU-Armenia Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement (CEPA) and appreciates Germany's support in this matter.

At the request of Bas, Simonyan presented details on the crisis in Lachin Corridor, the danger facing the blockaded 120,000 Armenians of Artsakh and the multi-layered humanitarian problems.

Simonyan warned that Azerbaijan is seeking to forcefully displace the Armenian population before the eyes of the whole world by continuing its policy of ethnic cleansing and creating unbearable living conditions.

"We expect our German colleagues to take practical steps to ensure the immediate implementation of the court's decision by Azerbaijan through the application of sanctions against Azerbaijan," Simonyan said.

He added that Armenia welcomes the German side's efforts aimed at peace in the region and thanked the German government for supporting the EU's decision on deploying a long-term monitoring mission to Armenia.

Simonyan invited Bas to pay an official visit to Armenia.



INTERNATIONAL

Armenian Genocide Square Inaugurated in Haifa, Israel

HAIFA, Israel (Public Radio of Armenia) — On Monday, March 20, the Armenian Genocide Square was inaugurated in the city center of Haifa, the Armenian National Committee of Jerusalem reported.

The ceremony took place despite great pressure from the Turkish Embassy in Tel Aviv.

Present at the event were the mayor of the city of Haifa Einat Kalisch-Rotem, city council members, the Armenian Ambassador to Israel Dr. Arman Agopian, representatives of the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem, the ANCJ and members of the Armenian communities of Israel and representatives of various communities of Haifa.

Earlier this month the city council of Haifa voted unanimously to officially recognize the Armenian Genocide of 1915 and erect a memorial to the victims in the city.

Haifa thus becomes the second city in Israel to recognize the Armenian Genocide after Petah Tikva (east of Tel Aviv), where a memorial to the victims was erected in April 2020.

Meanwhile, the Turkish Ambassador



The ceremony of the Haifa Armenian Genocide square

to Israel had demanded that the country's government ban the erection of the monument in Haifa.



The audience at the event.

Tekeyan Cultural Association Aid Distributed in Aleppo

ALEPPO — The February 6, 2023 earthquake and the aftershocks that struck Turkey and Syria also affected Aleppo Armenians, who have for years been enduring war and its aftermath. Many countries and organizations sent moral and financial aid to the Aleppo Armenians. Among them is the Tekeyan Cultural Association (TCA) of the United States and Canada.

The Tekeyan Cultural Association of Aleppo expressed its thanks via its Facebook page, declaring: “On this occasion, we express our profound thanks and gratitude especially to the central bodies of the Tekeyan Cultural Association of the United States and Canada, which immediately organized a fundraising campaign and met our needs.” In turn, the Aleppo TCA distributed this aid in the form of provisions to its circles.



Azerbaijan ‘Breaches’ Seize Positions in Nagorno-Karabakh

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Russia urged Azerbaijan to comply with the agreement, which placed areas of the former Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast that Azerbaijan had not taken control of at the time of the ceasefire under the control of a Russian peacekeeping force.

Stepanakert announced on Saturday evening that Russian peacekeepers had taken up positions on the height taken by Azerbaijani troops and were negotiating their withdrawal.

Advertisements

In a statement later in the evening, the Foreign Ministry of Nagorno-Karabakh called on the peacekeeping mission and the international community to act.

“The authorities expect the peacekeeping contingent to take practical steps to eliminate the consequences of this violation and prevent new violations,” the state-

ment read.

They also said Azerbaijan’s actions were a “cynical response” to a ruling by the International Court of Justice ordering Azerbaijan to unblock the Lachin Corridor.

On Friday, the Azerbaijani Defense Ministry published footage of what they said was the construction of a new alternative road to the Lachin Corridor, warning at the time that they would take ‘preventive’ measures.

Baku has previously accused Yerevan, Stepanakert, and the Russian peacekeepers of using an alternative unpaved road to transfer arms and Armenian troops to the region. Both Yerevan and Stepanakert have denied the accusations.

According to Stepanakert, the road in question was used to connect four villages cut off from the rest of Nagorno-Karabakh by the closure of the Lachin Corridor.

The 2020 ceasefire agreement stipulated

that a new section of the Lachin Corridor be constructed to bypass the entrance to Shusha, though a final agreed route has not been made public.

There have been unconfirmed media reports that an alternative route was being used to bring in supplies from Armenia, though no evidence of arms transfers has emerged.

Growing discontent

Following the Second Nagorno-Karabakh War, Azerbaijani troops have appeared to breach the line of contact with Nagorno-Karabakh several times.

In December 2020, in the immediate aftermath of the ceasefire, two villages in the Hadrut region of Nagorno-Karabakh, stipulated to be under the control of the Russian peacekeeping force, were captured by Azerbaijani troops, who took dozens of soldiers captive.

Russian peacekeepers remained silent at the time.

In March 2022, Azerbaijani troops advanced in the direction of the village of Parukh (Farukh), forcing villagers to evacuate and positioning themselves in the mountains surrounding the village.

Despite the peacekeeping mission deploying troops and armoured vehicles to the area, residents have not been allowed to return due to security concerns.

These and other incidents in Nagorno-Karabakh have led officials in Yerevan and Stepanakert to question the effectiveness of the Russian peacekeeping contingent. There have also been growing calls for an international peacekeeping mission or UN mandate for the Russian mission.

(This article originally appeared in OC Media on March 26.)

Community News

More than 65 Members Send Bipartisan Letter In Support of Artsakh and Armenia

WASHINGTON — On March 23, more than 65 Members co-sponsored a letter spearheaded by Armenian Caucus Co-Chair Representative Frank Pallone, Jr. (D-NJ) that outlines key congressional priorities for Armenia and Artsakh, reported the Armenian Assembly of America.

The bipartisan letter, sent to House State Foreign Operations Appropriations Subcommittee Chairman Mario Díaz-Balart (R-FL) and Ranking Member Barbara Lee (D-CA), specifically calls for \$100 million in aid to Armenia, \$50 million in aid to Artsakh, \$2 million for demining efforts, as well as enforcing Section 907 of the FREEDOM Support Act, and releasing Armenian prisoners of war and captured civilians who were supposed to be freed under the terms of the trilateral statement signed in November 2020.

Citing Azerbaijan's "inhumane" and illegal blockade of the Lachin Corridor, which is now in its third month, the letter emphasized that the region's Armenian people are "on the brink of a humanitarian crisis" that "threatens to have lasting consequences on the region's security."

While the Armenian people are still trying to recover from the "severe hardships caused by the deadly 44-day war" that Azerbaijan, with the full and open support of Turkey, waged on Artsakh in September 2020, the letter highlighted that these ongoing "cruel actions" of blockading the Lachin Corridor and denying access to medical treatments, food, and essential goods, have created "overwhelming needs" and therefore "the assistance provided to date by the U.S. government is wholly insufficient."

In order to bolster the security of Armenia and champion democracy in the region, the letter also urges assistance to Armenia to "protect their sovereignty" in the face of constant "Azerbaijani expansion and authoritarianism." The "critical investment" will build on the past support for Armenia and Artsakh and further strengthen U.S.-Armenia relations and partnerships. Cutting off military assistance to Azerbaijan is another point underscored in the letter, which states that it is "abundantly clear that the continued waiver of Section 907 of the FREEDOM Support Act, amidst Azerbaijan's unabated policy of aggression, has emboldened this violent pattern of behavior."

Tracing President Ilham Aliyev's brutal 2020 assault on Artsakh not long after receiving over \$100 million in security assistance through the Section 333 Building Partner Capacity Program in Fiscal Years 2018 and 2019, the letter states that "holding Azerbaijan accountable is long overdue and must begin with Congress see SUPPORT, page 9



NAASR Celebrates Marc Mamigonian's Quarter Century at Organization

By Kenneth Martin
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

BELMONT, Mass. — The packed room at the headquarters of the National Association of Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR) was filled with good cheer for the event on March 16 to mark (no pun intended) the 25th work anniversary of Academic Director Marc Mamigonian.

Silva Seredrakian, the director of NAASR, opened the evening ceremonies and congratulated Mamigonian for his service and especially his guidance during her first days and weeks at NAASR.

The evening events opened with a piano performance of a new and unique composition created just for the occasion by Tanya Barteveian, pianist and composer, originally from Istanbul, and a graduate of Harvard University and the New England Conservatory of Music. She volunteered her time and talent with a new *Music for Marc - Improvisation*.

An interview and conversational format followed up by a question-and-answer segment for in person and Zoom meeting viewers was led by Dr. Khachig Mouradian, recently appointed Armenian and Georgian Area Specialist at the Library of Congress in Washington, DC, and lecturer in Middle Eastern, South Asian and African Studies at Columbia University, and member of the NAASR Board of Directors.

The audience discovered through Mouradian's inquiries that he grew up in Dover, NH, where there was practically no Armenian community. His interest was nurtured and early Armenian identity formed through his extended family support and reading, including one of his much re-read favorites by William Saroyan, *My Name is Aram*, and *The Urchin*, by Kerop Bedoukian, and other titles.

Mamigonian received his bachelor's from the University of New Hampshire and a master's degree from Tufts University.

Kind words of appreciation were given during closing remarks by author and NAASR chairperson Judy Saryan.

Also volunteering his talent and services out of respect and friendship with Mamigonian, David Medzorian of Daval Video Productions shot video for event documentation and the live Zoom internet feed for viewers around the world.

Laura Yardumian, program and administrative associate at NAASR, when questioned said that Mamigonian is an incredible colleague. She praised his sense of humor for making the work incredibly enjoyable. She added, "He is generous with his time and talent, and just is a fine human being. His life journey speaks for itself. The body of work he never set out to create has truly advanced Armenian Studies, boosted scholars, and developed NAASR programs into what they are today."

To see the recorded event go to: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QYldT2Ck-4ig>



Marc Mamigonian, left, with Dr. Khachig Mouradian (Ken Martin photo)

AIWA Scholarship Applications Are Due On April 18; Over \$80,000 Awarded for Current Year

BOSTON — April 18 is the deadline for college and university students to submit Scholarship Applications to the Armenian International Women's Association (AIWA) for the 2023-2024 academic year.

More than \$80,000 was awarded for the current academic year in scholarship aid by the AIWA Central Board and Affiliates to graduate and undergraduate students from the United States, Canada, Armenia, Syria, Lebanon, Turkey, and other countries in fields ranging from mathematics and architecture to government, public administration, medicine, art, and design.

New this year is a \$5,000 scholarship established by Dr. Patti Fletcher and her two daughters in memory of her maternal grandmother, Arshalous Tashjian Medzorian, an Armenian Genocide survivor who lived an incredibly hard life but always retained love and hope in her heart.

Fletcher describes the scholarship as a "passion project" inspired by her grandmother's belief in the power of education, which gives women options to harness their power and make a difference in their lives. In addition to education, Dr. Fletcher notes, "technology is a key vehicle to level the playing field for all populations" and "Armenia and Armenian women are no different."

The scholarship is designed to support mid-career Armenian women "who are pursuing advanced STEM and/or economic development degrees in order to make a better life for themselves, their families and the communities where they live and work."

Her ultimate goal, she adds, is "to raise the next generation of Armenian women leaders who are on missions to close the gender gap in business, academia, and government."

A tech executive, award-winning marketing and business influencer, board member, and angel investor, Fletcher is author of the best-selling book *Disrupters: Success Strategies From Women Who Break The Mold*.

AIWA scholarships, ranging in value from \$500 to \$5,000, are funded by named endowments as well as annual donations. Events of recent years have created increasing obstacles to students seeking a higher education, ranging from the covid pandemic, the Azeri/Armenian conflict, deteriorating social and economic condition in the Middle East, and always the high and ever-increasing costs. Every year the need for support far outweighs available funds, and AIWA encourages donations for this means of assistance and encouragement for talented, needy student applicants.

Details regarding eligibility for AIWA scholarships, as well as the scholarship application can be found on the AIWA website: www.aiwainternational.org. Questions regarding the scholarships can be addressed to scholarships@aiwainternational.org.



COMMUNITY NEWS

How a Comedian and a Chef Turned Armenian-Mexican Food Into a Funny, Viral Pairing

By Nate Jackson

LOS ANGELES (*Los Angeles Times*) — Using late-night munchies to crossbreed cultures is a long-held tradition of the L.A. food scene. Add in comedy, a rekindled friendship between a Mexican Armenian comic and an Armenian chef to the mix, and suddenly you have a tasty new menu of multicultural creations.

Like most good things, it started with a burrito. Correction: a “Lahmarito”

Imagine a piece of lavash — a Middle Eastern flatbread akin to a tortilla — the size of a pillowcase. Add a couple fistfuls of shredded cheese as a first layer underneath crispy rounds of Lahmajune — think small Armenian pizzas topped with minced meat and minced vegetables. Add fresh pico de gallo, serrano peppers, carne asada, Mexican rice, a dried spiced meat called basturma, creamy hummus and spicy salsa. The whole concoction is wrapped tightly, grilled golden brown on both sides and sliced in half to reveal the layers of bliss inside.

When they first stepped back and admired their creation while filming an [Instagram video](#) for their followers, comedian Jack Assadourian Jr. and chef Ara Zada knew they had something special on their hands before they even took a bite. And not just because of the millions of views from followers salivating over their food while laughing at their cartoonish, knife-flipping, food-prepping techniques. Their belly-busting “Arm-Mex” cuisine also showcased a pairing that’s as L.A. as anything you could put on your plate.

“People immediately hit our DMs asking where we could order the food,” Assadourian said. “Ara does this for a living, he’s a chef, I’m a comedian, so to put those two elements together is a fun experience.”

Each video features Assadourian and Zada tag-teaming the creation of one of their new Armenian-Mexican dishes as they rattle off ingredients and one-liners in fast-

cut-style instructional videos (there’s usually more laughter than instructions). Part of the reason the food ideas work is because the cultures pair together as well as the flavors.

“Mexicans and Armenians are very similar when it comes to culture, the family bonds are very much the same ... I have a bunch of Mexican friends, and they all have



Mexican Armenian comedian Jack Assadourian, stage name Jack Jr., left, and Armenian chef Ara Zada sample Arm-Mex Fries, celebrating their cultures, while making a food video at Zada’s home in Chatsworth. (Mel Melcon / Los Angeles Times)

the same family values,” Zada said. “So the food is different in spices, but culturally we’re the same.”

For Assadourian, this fusion has been with him his entire life. Born to a Mexican mother and Armenian father — the owners of the Haha Comedy Club in North Hollywood since 1988 — his parents opened the club decades ago after it started as a Mexican restaurant.

As a half-Mexican, half-Armenian comedian, Assadourian has carved out his own niche in comedy, producing shows that cater to both sides of his heritage. The recent food videos with Zada presented a chance to finally bring the two sides together.

Assadourian and Zada grew up as child-

hood friends, running amok and singing karaoke inside the club during off-hours while their parents met and socialized. They remained close up until their early teens when Zada’s father died. Gradually, they lost touch and went their separate ways. Jack went on to become a comedian, while Zada became a chef. Earlier this year, the two reconnected randomly when Zada’s fiancée (now wife) decided to take him out to see a comedy show to get him out of the house. It was during a rough time for Zada, who had just overcome kidney cancer.

The night he revisited the Haha, his fiancée hadn’t told him where they were going; but when they pulled up to the club, Zada immediately recognized it and they went inside looking for Assadourian, who was away on tour at the time. After finding out Assadourian had become a touring comedian, Zada direct-messaged him on Instagram. Like any good friendship, the two of them picked up where they left off—with jokes.

“I was like, ‘He has a ton of followers and probably won’t even answer my message right away,’” Zada said.

“Do you remember me?” Zada typed.

Assadourian quickly replied, “F— man, I thought you died!”

While catching up on the last 25 years or so, the friends realized some striking similarities in their stories — both had married, divorced and remarried, and now had blended families. The two started constantly hanging out again.

“We even started singing karaoke together again like nothing ever happened,” Assadourian said.

While Assadourian went into the family business, Zada became a chef focused on exploring Armenian cuisine, even co-authoring a book on it called [“Lavash” in 2019](#). The book established him as an authority on the flavors of Armenia, which are hard to master given that food preparation varies depending on where a particular group of Armenians migrated to following the Armenian genocide.

“In 1914-1915 there was a genocide and

millions of Armenians were killed by Turks, and a bunch of people got to flee. So they fled and then they basically went to different regions and assimilated with them,” Zada said. “Some people changed their names — my family changed their last name when they fled to Egypt — so they adapted to the region and cooked their Armenian cuisine with that region’s influence and flair.”

Armenian food in the U.S. never really came into prominence the way other cuisines did, or in some cases the food got even more homogenized and changed its identity. “One thing you’ll always notice is that there’s no Armenian restaurants, they’re always ‘Greek,’” Assadourian pointed out.

One reason the videos fusing Armenian and Mexican food have taken off is how both cultures have a knack for absorbing flavors, especially in L.A. The harmony comes together in simple ways in the dishes they create on camera.

“Armenians from our region here in L.A. have a Mexican influence, and that’s a good influence,” Zada said. “If this was 200 years ago, our Armenian Elote dish would just be Armenian food. I mean, we’ve absorbed what the flavors are around.”

Recently, the pair taste-tested their menu in real life, bringing their first monthly pop-up restaurant experience to the Haha on March 11. The menu, based on their most popular videos, included Armenian Elote, Sujuk Fries and the Lahmarito. The pop-up inside the Haha will also be paired with an “Arm-Mex” comedy show featuring a mix of Armenian and Mexican comics. For Assadourian and Zada, using the popularity of their funny TikTok videos to bring cultures together to laugh and enjoy food is a recipe for real-life impact.

“I got a DM from someone who said, ‘My kids are half Armenian, half Mexican and you’re a pioneer,’” Assadourian said. “You’re our leader!”

“The feedback of Armenian food and Mexican food together has been ridiculous,” Zada adds. “Everybody wants to taste it and everybody wants a piece.”

(Nate Jackson is a deputy editor for Entertainment and Arts. Previously, he served as a news editor for the *Wrap* and the music editor for *OC Weekly*. This story originally appeared in the *Los Angeles Times* on March 7.)

Holy Week Schedule at New York’s St. Vartan Cathedral

NEW YORK — Holy Week signals the end of the Lenten period of separation, and a return to the full life of the church. The coming Holy Week will go forward in the Eastern Diocese with provision for in-person worship as well as the online broadcast of services.

St. Vartan Armenian Cathedral will be open to the public throughout Holy Week. The series of special Holy Week services, culminating in Easter Sunday on April 9, will be broadcast to the public over the St. Vartan Cathedral Facebook page.

The schedule of services is as follows:

Palm Sunday, the commemoration of Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem, falls on April 2. Fr. Davit Karamyan (Vicar of St. Vartan Cathedral) will be the celebrant for the services, which will begin streaming over Facebook at 10 a.m. The *Turen-patzek* or “Door-Opening” Service will be held after the Divine Liturgy. A special Palm Sunday Children’s Blessing service will take place on the cathedral’s outdoor plaza following the *Turen-patzek* service. Children are invited to take part in this meaningful service and enjoy a special program and reception.

On Holy Tuesday, April 4, a Vespers service in remembrance of the Ten Virgins,

will begin at 6 p.m.

April 6 is Great and Holy Thursday, and the day’s services memorialize the Last Supper, Jesus’ vigil in the Garden of Gethsemane, his arrest and trial. Two separate services will be celebrated on this day. In the morning, the Divine Liturgy will begin at 10 a.m.

In the evening, the “Washing of the Feet” ceremony will start at 6:30 p.m., with the *Khavaroom* or Vigil Service following at 8 p.m. During the Washing of Feet ceremony, twelve individuals from the community will stand in place of the apostles.

The crucifixion and death of Christ will be marked on April 7 — Great and Holy Friday — and two services will take place. The Order of the Crucifixion of Christ will begin at 12 noon. That same evening, at 6 p.m., the Order of the Entombment of the Lord, or *Taghoom* Service, will take place.

April 7 is also the fixed date for the annual observance of the Annunciation to the Virgin Mary. In accordance with the rubrics governing Holy Week services, the Divine Liturgy will *not* be celebrated on Annunciation Day, although the hymn to the Holy Virgin Mary will be sung as part of the day’s ceremonies.

On Great and Holy Saturday, April 8, the scripture-reading ceremony will begin at 6:30 p.m., followed by the *Jrakalouyts* (“Lamp-Lighting”) *Badarak*.

Finally, the drama of Holy Week will culminate on Easter Sunday, April 9: the central holy day of the Christian calendar, commemorating the discovery of Christ’s empty tomb and the news of his resurrection. The Divine Liturgy will begin at 10 a.m., with Fr. Mesrop Parsamyan celebrating the liturgy and delivering the homily, for the first time in his capacity as Primate of the Diocese of the Armenian Church of America.

Plans call for the cathedral’s Easter service to conclude in the “Release of Doves” ceremony on the plaza, resuming a long-standing Easter tradition after its suspension during the pandemic years.

A reception for the public will take place in Haik and Alice Kavookjian Auditorium following the Easter Sunday *Badarak*.

All of the Holy Week services at St. Vartan Cathedral will be broadcast over the cathedral Facebook page, with East Sunday services broadcast in addition over the Eastern Diocese’s YouTube platform. Parishes around the Eastern Diocese may

have their own schedule of in-person and online services; contact your local parish for details.

Holy Week services at St. Vartan Cathedral and all local parishes of the Eastern Diocese will be in compliance with local public health guidelines. Under present conditions regulations have been relaxed, and mask-wearing in the sanctuary is optional. Keep apprised of updates to this schedule, and find inspirational messages and news, on the Eastern Diocese’s website and Facebook page.

APRIL 2: Palm Sunday *Badarak*, 10 a.m. Fr. Davit Karamyan celebrating.

APRIL 4: Holy Tuesday Vespers service, 6 p.m.

APRIL 6: Holy Thursday “Washing of Feet” service, 6:30 p.m. / *Khavaroom* service, 8 p.m.

APRIL 7: Holy Friday Crucifixion service, 12 noon / Burial Service, 6 p.m.

APRIL 8: Holy Saturday Scripture Reading and *Jrakalouyts* service, 6:30 p.m.

APRIL 9: Easter Sunday *Badarak*, 10 a.m. Fr. Mesrop Parsamyan, Primate, celebrating.



OBITUARY

Armenian Political Leader, Editor and Writer Edmond Y. Azadian Passes Away

AZADIAN, from page 1

Journalism

Early in his life, he demonstrated a keen interest in journalism, and after being trained by celebrated editor and educator Kersam Aharonian at the *Zartonk* Armenian daily (1953-1958), he was invited to serve as the editor of the daily *Arev* in Cairo, Egypt, where he remained until 1967.

Coming to the United States, he assumed the position of executive director of the Baikar Association in Boston, while also serving as associate editor for the *Baikar* Armenian daily and the English-language weekly, *The Armenian Mirror-Spectator* (1967-1972). He also edited the *Baikar* literary quarterly in this period.

He later became one of the founders of the *Abaka* newspaper of Montreal and the *Azg* newspaper in Yerevan after Armenian independence. He played a key role in restarting the publication of *Baikar* as a weekly from 2017, and he served as its chief editor until his death.

He has written extensively on Armenian literature, arts, politics and history in Beirut's *Shirag* literary monthly magazine, *Abril* monthly of Los Angeles, *Nay-iri* weekly, *Gragan Tert*, *Baikar*, *Abaka*, *Zartonk*, *Arev*, the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator*, the *Armenian Observer*, *Nor Geank* and *Ararat* quarterly.

Politics

He became a member of the ADL after graduating high school and gradually rose in the ranks to come to hold various responsible positions. As an ADL leader, while in Egypt, Azadian played an important role

in maintaining stability and preserving the connection of the local Armenian diocese with Echmiadzin during the Cold War period. In the US, he became a part of the ADL District Committee of the Eastern United States and Canada, and for many years was a member of the ADL Central Committee.

From 1982 to 1995, he was the head of the ADL Central Committee's Press Bureau. He participated in various meetings to try to end internal divisions which began in the ADL in 1995.

He was involved at the early meetings of the Armenian Assembly of America (founded in 1972) and served on its Steering Committee. He also often acted on behalf of Alex Manoogian in relations with the Assembly, as the latter was a member of the Board of Trustees.

Tekeyan Cultural Association

He joined the Tekeyan Cultural Association (TCA) at an early age in Beirut, contributing regularly to the organization's literary magazine *Shirag*, and in Egypt was involved in sister associations of TCA, Kegharvestasirats of Cairo, and Dikran Yergat of Alexandria.

He was a founding member of the TCA of the United States and Canada, and was from the start a life member of its central board. He served as its president for several terms, starting in 1979, and most recently, from 2016 to the present.

He was a member of the committees of the TCA Haigashen Ouzounian Literary Award and the Vartkess and Rita Balian Press Award and played a fundamental role in the TCA Cultural Awards ceremonies

which began in 1991 in Yerevan and continue in general on an annual basis to this day.

Through his work with TCA, Azadian supported the Vahan Tekeyan School of Beirut, the five Tekeyan schools of Armenia, and the TCA Arshag Dickranian School in Los Angeles, including through active fundraising efforts.

Books

His Armenian-language books include *Life and Dream in Armenia* (1964), *Essays on Arts and Literature* (1988), *Views and Judgements* (2006), *Vahan Tekeyan: Selected Poems* (2012), *With My Time and Contemporaries* (2018), *Lost and Unlost Pages* (2019), and the two-volume *In the National and Political Vortex* (2021).

His first English-language volume was titled *Portraits and Profiles* (1995), edited by Hagop Hacikyan and Edward Franchuk, followed by *History on the Move* (1999). He served as editor of the English edition of Kersam Aharonian's *A Historical Survey of the Armenian Case* (1989), executive editor of *A Legacy of Armenian Treasures: The Alex and Marie Manoogian Museum* (2013), and co-editor of the bilingual volume *Vahan Tekeyan: Selected Poems* (2014).

Service on Boards and Programs, Awards

Azadian was elected as a member of both the Armenian Writers Union and the Journalists Union and served as an advisor to the Minister of Culture in Armenia from 2005. He was an overseas member of the Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Armenia and had been given honorary doctoral degrees by both Yerevan State University (1988) and the Khachatur Abovyan

Armenian State Pedagogical University. He was a founding member of the Friends of Yerevan State University association.

He served on the AGBU Alex and Marie Manoogian School Board since 1972, supervising the Armenian Studies Program, and serving as director. Since 1978, he had served as a founding director of Detroit's Heritage of Armenian Culture radio program.

He served on the board of trustees of the American Armenian International College of La Verne, California and the Wayne State University Press publications' Armenian advisory board, and was an advisor to the University of Michigan Ann Arbor's Armenian Studies program. In 2016, he was appointed as a member of the Michigan Council for Genocide and Holocaust Education by the state's governor, Rick Snyder.

Azadian was awarded the St. Sahak-St. Mesrop Medal by Catholicos of All Armenians Vasken I in 1989 for his journalistic and literary achievements. He is the recipient of the Movses Khorenatsi and the Serving Armenia (2009) presidential awards, the Hakob Meghapart Medal from the Armenian National Library in 1991, and the highest-level Diamond Studded Ararat Medal from the TCA of Armenia.

In his personal life, there is no doubt that his marriage to Nora Ipekian, which took place while he lived in Egypt, enriched his life greatly for many decades, until her passing less than two years ago. She was not only a gifted painter and teacher, but was erudite in literature, especially Armenian, and was an active leader of TCA in Detroit.

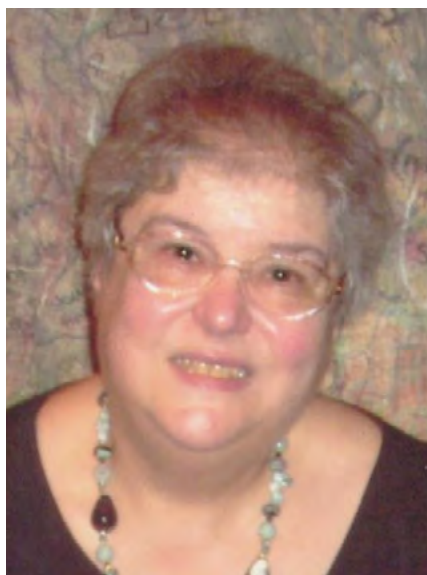
Marjorie Martiesian

Longtime Educator, Library Supporter

PROVIDENCE, R.I. — Marjorie Martiesian, 76, of Saunderstown, formally of Providence, died Saturday, March 18, after a three-month illness with glioblastoma (brain tumor).

The daughter of the late Andre and Sadie (Kaloostian) Martiesian, she was a member of the first graduating class of the Community College of Rhode Island (CCRI) and graduated from Mount St. Joseph College with a degree in elementary education. She also earned a master's in education from Rhode Island College.

Marjorie will be remembered for her



monthly with many of her fellow retired teachers.

Marjorie was a member of the St. Sahag & St. Mesrob Armenian Apostolic Church since a young child where she attended Sunday School and later taught Sunday School. She was also a member of the Parish Council and the Women's Guild. Marjorie was a member of Daughters of Vartan and was honored as Daughter of the Year.

As an advocate of education, Marjorie was a member of the Armenian Students' Association where she served as a member on their national Board of Trustees and president of the Providence branch. Marjorie was also a current Board member of the CCRI Foundation.

After her retirement, Marjorie continued to advocate for reading proficiency. She was a past Board member of the Rochambeau branch of the Providence Public Library and was currently on the Board of the Narragansett Public Library and was a strong supporter of their Building Fund.

Marjorie is survived by a brother, Terrence Sahag (Dorothy) Martiesian, a sister, Andrea Martiesian (Philip) Doughty, and Adrienne (Dennis) Cady, her dear friend. Marjorie is also survived by her nieces and nephews, Jason, Joshua, Julia, Jennifer, Lauren, Marc, Carla, Olivia, Aram, Sadie, Kian, Leila, Levon, Ani, Cassius and Princeton.

Marjorie's family expresses their gratitude to the staff of the Steere House Nursing and Rehabilitation Center for the exemplary care she received.

Her funeral service was on Monday, March 27 at the St. Sahag & St. Mesrob Armenian Apostolic Church, 70 Jefferson Street, Providence.

generous heart and unconditional kindness to everyone. She taught for 28 years in the Providence School System as a reading specialist, with the greater part of her career being at the Broad Street Elementary School. She was a kind and caring teacher who touched many lives. Following her retirement, Marjorie attended Lunch Bunch

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OBITUARY

Educator, Historian and Genocide Recognition Activist Dr. Dennis R. Papazian Dies

Dr. Dennis Richard Papazian passed away on Thursday, March 16, after a brief illness. He was 91.

Born the youngest of four children in Augusta, Ga. to Armenian parents from Istanbul, Turkey, Dennis lived a life of devotion and service to his community, church, and nation. His family moved to Detroit in the mid 1940s to join a growing Armenian community. As his family struggled to create a life in a new land, Dennis was determined to pursue an education that would ensure a life of security and the promise of the American dream. Across the arc of his life, Dennis was recognized as a distinguished leader and pillar of the Armenian community, with significant achievements in academia, political advocacy, and church stewardship. (The Mirror-Spectator recently published an extended interview with him and his wife, Dr. Mary Papazian.)

As a young man, Dennis was nurtured by numerous mentors such as Archbishop Tiran Nersoyan and Professor George Nalikian, whom he came to know through the Armenian church community and as a student leader at Wayne State University. During these years, his leadership abilities continued to grow, as he encountered prominent leaders, including two American presidents and a former First Lady. The youngest of four siblings, Dennis was the first in his family to earn a college degree, ultimately earning a Ph.D. in Russian history from the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, and becoming one of the first American students to study in the then Soviet Union during the height of the Cold War. This experience placed him at the center of major geopolitical events that influenced the course of his life.

He also was active in the Armenian Church Youth Organization of America (ACYOA), serving on the Central Council and traveling frequently from Detroit to New York, something he would do years later as a member of the Diocesan Council for the Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church. Dennis's time in the Soviet Union led him to become an esteemed analyst as the Soviet Union broke apart decades later.

Upon his return to Michigan in 1962 following his recovery from a near fatal air crash in Uzbekistan, Papazian went on to live a life of contribution and service and became a key leader in the emergence of an Armenian-American community just finding its footing fifty years after the 1915 Armenian Genocide.

For more than 40 years, he enjoyed a distinguished academic career as a noted author, speaker, and professor of history specializing in Russia and the Soviet Union. His tenure at the University of Michigan,



Dearborn, started in 1962, when he joined the faculty. Soon after, he began serving as head of the department of social and behavioral sciences. From there, he oversaw the division of literature, science and the arts, then briefly held the title of associate dean of academic affairs.

In his early years, he led the expansion of the Dearborn Campus from a upper two-year college to a four-year university. In 1985, he founded the Armenian Research Center at the University of Michigan, Dearborn and served as its first director until his retirement in 2006. As a result of his tutelage and leadership, several of Dennis's students went on to work for the CIA, the State Department and other government agencies. He also served as an authority on Russia and the former Soviet Union for numerous media outlets and as an expert resource in dozens of refugee and asylum cases from the former Soviet Union and its successor republics.

In addition to his role as an educator and scholar, Dennis served tirelessly as a forward-looking and creative leader of the emerging Armenian-American community, where he worked with leaders such as Alex Manoogian, Edward and Helen Mardigian, Stephen Mugar, Hrair Hovnanian, Richard Hovannisian, and many more.

Papazian was the founding executive director of the Armenian Assembly of America. Under his leadership, the Armenian Assembly worked with key elected officials to secure passage of the Armenian Genocide Resolution in the United States House of Representatives. He also brought together several Armenian organizations to apply for and receive \$1 million in grant funds from the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) for the Aid to Lebanon project which supported the Armenian

community in the Bourj Hamoud neighborhood of Beirut during the 1975 Lebanese Civil War. Dennis pitched to and worked with National Geographic to create a piece about the Armenian-American community entitled "The Proud Armenians," which was published in 1978.

Dennis traveled extensively during his career, presenting papers and delivering lectures in Armenia, Germany, Austria, the Czech Republic, Israel and several other countries. At one point in his career, he conducted research on the USSR and personally worked with the State Department to coordinate an exchange between the University of Michigan and Moscow State University. In 1976 Dennis received an award from the U.S. Department of State honoring his work as a scholar and diplomat, which was followed by a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities in 1977 and an award from the USAID in 1978.

Together with his wife Mary, the former President of San Jose State University, whom he married in 1991, Dennis was an ardent and faithful member of the Armenian community throughout his life. He represented the Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church of America on the Supreme Spiritual Councils held in Echmiadzin, Armenia that elected Catholicos Karekin I (1995) and Catholicos Karekin II (1999) and participated in several Armenia-Diaspora conferences in Armenia during the early years of independence.

Papazian served on numerous boards and panels related to education and civic outreach, such as the Society for Armenian Studies, St. Nersess Armenian Seminary, the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research, the Michigan chapter of the American Red Cross, the Michigan Ethnic Heritage Association, and, most recently, as a member of the New Jersey Commission on Holocaust and Genocide Education. He held numerous leadership roles in the Armenian community, including president on several occasions of the Society for Armenian Studies, advisor to the annual Times Square Armenian Genocide Commemoration, member of the Diocesan Council of the Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church, and as Grand Commander of the Knights of Vartan, an Armenian fraternal organization. He also has been affiliated with the American Association of University Professors, the National Association for Ethnic Studies, the Association for Slavic, East European and Eurasian Studies, and the American Academy of Political and Social Science.

Throughout his career, he spoke to audiences large and small on topics ranging

from Russian and Soviet history, Armenian Genocide recognition, theology and the Armenian church, among many other topics. He authored numerous essays, articles, books and op-eds, served as editor of the Journal of the Society for Armenian Studies (JSAS) from 1995 to 2001, and recently completed his memoir, From My Life and Thought: Reflections on an Armenian-American Journey, which was published in May 2022 by The Press at Fresno State University, as part of their Armenian Studies series. Dennis holds a Bachelor of Arts and Master of Arts from Wayne State University, a Master of Arts and Doctor of Philosophy from the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, and an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters from the Armenian State Pedagogical University in Yerevan, Armenia.

Dennis is survived by his wife Mary; his daughters Ani and Marie; nieces Louise Yardumian (Haig), Elise Papazian, Melody Lopez (Marc), and Vicki Ware (Hank); nephews Leon Sarkisian (Sharon) and Garo Papazian; great-niece Nicole Papazian; great-nephews Edward Yardumian (Eva), Ara Yardumian (Tatiana), Nishan Papazian, Alex Lopez, and Christian Lopez; great-great-nieces Kennedy Yardumian and Valentina Yardumian; great-great-nephews Eli Yardumian and Edward Yardumian; brothers-in-law Robert Arshagouni (Many), Michael Arshagouni (Ned Rodriguez), and Paul Arshagouni (Long Hoang); nieces Nina Arshagouni (Matt Pugmire), Liana Arshagouni, and Beth Arshagouni; and great-nieces Alik, Aida, and Maro Arshagouni; as well as dozens of extended family members, colleagues, and friends. He will be deeply missed.

There will be memorial services in his honor on various days across the country. The funeral service will take place at St. Leon Armenian Cathedral in Burbank, and will be officiated by Archbishop Hovnan Derderian on Tuesday, April 4 at 9:30 a.m. A graveside service will follow at Forest Lawn Hollywood Hills, with a memorial luncheon to follow. A 40-day memorial service will take place at St. John's Armenian Church in Southfield, MI on Sunday, April 30, with a reception to follow. A Celebration of Life will take place in the New York/New Jersey area later this year, with details to follow.

In lieu of flowers a donation can be made to the Dennis R. Papazian Memorial Foundation for advancing Armenian scholarship, education, and leadership. Donations can be mailed to the Dennis R. Papazian Memorial Foundation in care of Robert Arshagouni, 9176 Independence Avenue, Chatsworth, CA 91311.

More than 65 Members Send Bipartisan Letter In Support of Artsakh and Armenia

SUPPORT, from page 6
encouraging the Administration to fully enforce Section 907, restricting the Administration's authority to waive this law, and enacting statutory prohibitions on any new or pending U.S. military or security aid to Azerbaijan."

"The Assembly appreciates the over 65 Members of Congress who joined this critical letter that was initiated by Congressman Pallone and the Armenian Caucus," said Assembly Congressional Relations Director Mariam Khaloyan, who recently submitted testimony on behalf of the Assembly reinforcing this request letter and urging Congress to help prevent a second Armenian Genocide. "As the Armenian people continue to face a humanitarian crisis and genocidal threats, securing aid

for Armenia and Artsakh, stopping military assistance to Azerbaijan, and ensuring the release of Armenian prisoners of war is imperative. To further amplify our collective efforts, we encourage the community to participate in the upcoming Advocacy Summit and make our voices heard and our presence known in the halls of Congress."

Earlier this month the Administration released its Budget for Fiscal Year 2024, wherein it recommended approximately \$47 million in aid to Armenia and \$10 million to Azerbaijan. In addition to Rep. Pallone, the following Members signed the letter to the House Appropriations Committee: Adam Schiff (D-CA), Gus Bilirakis (R-FL), Brad Sherman (D-CA), Linda Sánchez (D-CA), Grace Napolitano

(D-CA), Katie Porter (D-CA), Tony Cardenas (D-CA), Jim McGovern (D-MA), Jake Auchincloss (D-MA), Jim Costa (D-CA), Lori Trahan (D-MA), Anna Eshoo (D-CA), Dina Titus (D-NV), Paul Tonko (D-NY), Zoe Lofgren (D-CA), Eric Swalwell (D-CA), Jan Schakowsky (D-IL), Ted Lieu (D-CA), Josh Gottheimer (D-NJ), Kevin Mullin (D-CA), Raja Krishnamoorthi (D-IL), Judy Chu (D-CA), Chellie Pingree (D-ME), Nanette Barragán (D-CA), John Sarbanes (D-MD), Susan Wild (D-PA), Rashida Tlaib (D-MI), Mike Lawler (R-NY), Jared Golden (D-ME), Haley Stevens (D-MI), Rob Menendez, Jr., (D-NJ), Donald Payne (D-NJ), Seth Magaziner (D-RI), Sydney Kamlager-Dove (D-CA), David Cicilline (D-RI), Stephen Lynch (D-MA), Jamie Raskin (D-MD), Abigail

Spanberger (D-VA), Brian Higgins (D-NY), Jimmy Gomez (D-CA), Nikki Budzinski (D-IL), Nicole Malliotakis (R-NY), Chrissy Houlahan (D-PA), Joaquin Castro (D-TX), Lou Correa (D-CA), Steven Horsford (D-NV), Richard Neal (D-MA), Don Beyer (D-VA), Ilhan Omar (D-MN), Brittany Pettersen (D-CO), Chris Pappas (D-NH), Lizzie Fletcher (D-TX), Jared Huffman (D-CA), Diana DeGette (D-CO), Jimmy Panetta (D-CA), Dan Kildee (D-MI), Donald Norcross (D-NJ), Mike Levin (D-CA), Lloyd Doggett (D-TX), Eleanor Norton (D-DC), Mary Gay Scanlon (D-PA), Brad Schneider (D-IL), Jim Himes (D-CT), Sheila Jackson Lee (D-TX), Darren Soto (D-FL), Robert Garcia (D-CA), Salud Carbajal (D-CA), Jonathan Jackson (D-IL).



COMMUNITY NEWS

Zareh Sinanyan Promotes Diaspora

DIASPORA, from page 1
said, “The first direction is promotion of repatriation and integration of repatriates. The second direction is the strengthening of the Armenia-diaspora partnership. The third direction is researching, empowering and supporting diaspora communities, and the fourth direction is the development of Armenia-diaspora strategy.”

Repatriation

In the most recent period of independence, Armenia has experienced a number of waves of repatriation, though Sinanyan admitted that they have not been anywhere near the size that is desired. “During each spike,” he said, “Armenia has shown that it is not really prepared to absorb repatriates, or provide an experience that makes that repatriation sustainable and long term for many of those people that initially chose Armenia.” He gave an example that approximately 50-60 percent of an estimated influx of 30,000 Syrian-Armenians, who came primarily from around 2011 to 2013, with lesser numbers later, left Armenia.

A new spike began last year of Russian Armenians (this is distinct from the perhaps temporary arrival of ethnic Russians). During that year, Sinanyan said his office responded to roughly 8,000 requests for assistance, including 800 visits of people to his headquarters, 3,700 phone calls and 3,500 letters. There were also several thousand contacts through various social media. Aside from providing general information about repatriation, the office, Sinanyan said, does everything from finding schools for children to helping with housing and jobs for adults. It just began offering Armenian language classes, expecting to help Syrian and Lebanese Armenians switch from Western to Eastern Armenian, but starting last March the program had to be revamped to teach Russian Armenians who don’t know Armenian at all.

While the Russian Armenians were not displaced by war, a smaller number of Ukrainian Armenians, a few thousand people, came after losing everything and fleeing physical danger. Most were Armenian citizens so they could not qualify for refugee status that would allow assistance from international organizations, but they needed immediate assistance. Sinanyan said that before “the slow wheels of bureaucracy could turn” and the Armenian government would provide funding, the High Commission applied to the Armenian Missionary Association of America, which agreed to fund a six-month social package, generous by Armenian standards according to Sinanyan, to allow these refugees to settle down in Armenia.

In order to better handle future repatriates, Sinanyan said his office was working on creating a Repatriation and Integration Center, modeled on the successful Israeli experience. Such a center would provide one-stop assistance for all the issues repatriates have to deal with, such as passport paperwork, housing, military registration, and education, thus reducing some of the stress on the repatriates. The Hirair and Anna Hovnanian Foundation has agreed to provide space in downtown Yerevan and, Sinanyan announced, the new office will open in roughly six weeks.

Parallel to this, an intergovernmental working group is being set up to coordinate the various ministries, agencies and governmental departments that deal with repatriates, since the Office of the High Commissioner will only be acting as a facilitator in coordinating connections. Finally, Sinanyan would like to follow the Israeli example

and create transitional housing for new repatriates. The government of Armenia has agreed to this politically but funding has to be found.

Research

One important project conceived in 2019 is mapping the Armenian diaspora by identifying Armenians in influential positions throughout the world to allow access to this potential resource for Armenia. The Office of the High Commissioner lost its budget due to the 2020 war, but for the last two years has hired a professional company, Sinanyan related, which does data mining to create a list. He said that some 75,000 pieces of individual data have been collected, and this program will be continued and improved.

Another way to gather information and strengthen ties is through visits of the High Commissioner to different communities. Sinanyan said in a private interview during his Boston visit, “Experience has shown that nothing replaces personal contact with communities. Often we go to communities because some urgent need arises.” He gave the examples of humanitarian aid to Aleppo after the earthquake, or to Beirut in August 2020 after the explosion in the port there.

Global Armenian Summit and Armenia-diaspora Strategy

Last October, the Office of the High Commissioner held a meeting, called the Global Armenian Summit, in which over 800 people from 45 different countries participated, and which had about 120 speakers, the majority of whom were from the diaspora. Planning began at the start of 2022, Sinanyan said, contrary to accusations by some that it was a last-minute event. He added at a private interview that “You have to understand that various structures went out of their way to try to derail it, but that didn’t help them because we had fundamentally prepared so well.”

A skeleton of an agenda was prepared, he said, then circulated to various individuals and organizations for their input. An advisory board of diasporans helped refine the agenda to include the priorities of both the diaspora and Armenia.

Among the results was the Armenia-diaspora strategy of the Office of the High Commissioner. The government asked for this strategic draft plan to be submitted to it in May, 2022, but Sinanyan refused, he said, because he wanted the input of experts first. The draft is ready and Sinanyan said it would be circulated to the government when he returned to Yerevan from his trip. Sometime during the first half of 2023, it would then be formally submitted to the government for approval.

A second result of the summit was the decision to organize an advisory council to the Office of the High Commissioner. Sinanyan said the council would be composed of 20-30 influential diasporans who could “help us navigate through these quite difficult waters that is the Armenia-diaspora relationship.”

Sinanyan was asked prior to the community meeting why a number of people in leading organizations did not receive invitations, and he replied that there was a recurring problem that many of the emails sent by his office would go into spam folders because of the gov.am ending of the email address. He said that multiple individuals invited to be speakers did not come, and only afterwards when they were approached to find out why, they would say they did not receive an invitation. Sinanyan would then show them the email he had sent, and they would check and find that it went directly into spam.

Another result of the summit was the creation of the Armenian National Youth Forum. The young people who participated in Global Armenian Summit complained that this was a season when students had to be in class, and secondly, the agenda did not reflect the interests of the youth. So a separate youth forum is being organized at the start of this August, which, though a period of hot weather in Yerevan, is vacation time for many young people. A skeletal agenda is being created which will be circulated, Sinanyan said, to Armenian student associations and other youth organizations for their feedback before finalizing the agenda. It is hoped that 400 people will participate. The dates will be just prior to the Pan-Armenian games which begin on August 4 so there will be complementarity.

Diaspora Commissioners

Perhaps one of the most significant forthcoming efforts at strengthening Armenia-diaspora relations might be the creation of diaspora commissioners. The National Assembly passed a law creating this institution on November 17, 2021. The high commissioner can recommend appointments to these posts, and the prime minister makes the actual appointment. Their status will be equivalent to advisors to the prime minister.

Till now, Sinanyan said that most people have been unaware that some Armenian embassies had diaspora attaches, exclaiming: “Exactly the problem! They never heard of it because these people never served their function.”

On the other hand, when regular diplomats deal with local Armenian communities, this can lead to a conflict, he continued, with their core diplomatic role. He said, “our diplomats have found comfort, when they get assigned to a post...[by] engrossing themselves in the community rather than in community work. No, diplomats must deal with diplomacy. They need to be, in the United States, on the Hill, in the White House, Pentagon, State House, wherever that may be, and spend a minimum amount of time with the community. That is a low hanging fruit – it’s easy. It is a comfort zone. We don’t want them to have a comfort zone.”

Sinanyan said that his office at present has a staff of 37, and hopes to increase it to 60-65 people by the end of this year, but even 65 is insufficient to deal with a diaspora of over 7 million. The current budget of his office, he revealed in a later interview, was in the range of 2 million dollars. In comparison, Israel’s ministry dealing with its diaspora has hundreds of employees and a budget of 370 million dollars. The diaspora commissioners will be an attempt to make up this gap without the corresponding expense by “finding people in the communities who are so active and dedicated and who will commit to do that liaison between our office and the communities – and are acceptable to those communities.”

No commissioners have yet been appointed, Sinanyan said, “because we didn’t want to do it without explaining this to the communities, without making sure they understand it, and thereby avoid problems.” This year he said some commissioners will be appointed. There are candidates in Russia, Australia and Poland. He told the Boston community audience that before this happens in the Boston area, they would be the first to be consulted so that they would have an input in the choice of the local commissioner.

The High Commissioner’s Office also communicates with the diaspora through social media and its website, diaspora.gov.am, which is in three languages.

iGorts

Among the programs aimed at strengthening Armenia-diasporan relations is iGorts, a fellowship initiated in 2020 that allows diasporan experts to work within the Armenian government for a one-year period. Positions in the Artsakh government are also included in the program. Sinanyan said that in 2019, when he asked for the necessary budget from Armenia’s National Assembly, he explained that the program is not meant to keep people living in Armenia but to help the government develop the culture to allow diasporans in its work, and secondly, to benefit from the expertise and way of thinking of the experts who can greatly help the government.

It initially was planned for 20 fellows, but in the first week over 900 applications were received, Sinanyan said, so that the funding was increased to 50 fellows, who came despite Covid and the war and worked in 19 different ministries and agencies. Interestingly, though this was not the main purpose, 68 percent of the participants in the first two years ended up staying in Armenia. Though most of them ended up in the private sector, 14 individuals work in the government, including a deputy minister of the economy and the president of Armenia’s national tourism agency.

At the Boston briefing, it turned out that the father of one of the iGorts fellows, Araz Chiloyan, who was instrumental in unveiling Armenia’s anti-Covid vaccination program, was in the audience.

Last year, the United Nations denominated iGorts as a “best practices” program that they recommend to be emulated by others. Sinanyan encouraged applicants for the upcoming third year of the program, with the deadline being April 5 (<http://diaspora.gov.am/en/programs/25/fellowship>).

Programs for Young People

Sinanyan exclaimed, “Did you notice that a lot of our programs seem to be youth-oriented? It is not so much by design as because life dictates it that way, because young people are freer. They are not tied down by mortgages. They are braver. They don’t have children or spouses that make things complicated...There are people of different ages who apply, but young people are more likely to take that chance and go to the homeland.”

Aside from the National Youth Forum, and even iGorts, he mentioned several other programs.

The two-year-old Diaspora Youth Ambassador program invites young activists in various communities to participate in a two-week intense cultural and educational program in Armenia in September, at the expense of the Armenian government. Sinanyan said, “We want them to not just theoretically fight for their homeland or theoretically like their homeland and be engaged with it, but to actually know what Armenia is...these young people have become our liaisons in our communities, which is a great resource for us.” The application process opens this year on April 15.

Step Toward Home is a program that was inherited from the former Ministry of Diaspora. It is a summer camp for children 13-18 years old from all over the diaspora, with fun and games in addition to some education, such as lessons in Armenian language and dance.

International Politics

After a formal presentation, Sinanyan answered questions from the audience, several of which dealt with the work of his office. The ARF members and affiliates present, considering it a rare opportunity to directly



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Commission Programs in Boston

ask questions of a government representative, largely focused on political issues.

When asked whether the Armenian government can provide any guarantees for the citizens of Artsakh if they become Azerbaijani citizens, Sinanyan replied that neither the West nor the Russians offer any provisions for self-determination nor any guarantees. However, he declared that the Russian variant includes Zangezur as an extraterritorial corridor, which is “cutting off our neck, our connection with Iran,” and “that is just unacceptable.” The Western version he said at least does not have any similar indication concerning Syunik and so is preferable. Last September, the US and Iran, he said, helped stop the Azerbaijani attack through diplomatic pressure, and the European Union observers came, mostly because of French pressure and some US involvement. Such intervention, and primarily whatever military means Armenians still retain, are the only guarantees Armenians can have, he said.

Sinanyan said that Armenia was trying to convince the West to not support a scenario where Azerbaijan can force Armenians to accept Azerbaijani citizenship. “Right now our general strategy is to make sure that our Armenian population remains in Artsakh,” he said, and remains connected to Armenia. Armenia continues to subsidize the Artsakh population and provide for its needs, he said.

This situation hopefully buys time for the Armenians to strengthen themselves, rearm and fix the military and grow the economy, he concluded. Meanwhile, if the population remains Armenian and a corridor to Armenia remains, Sinanyan said, it will be hard for the Azerbaijanis to carry out ethnic cleansing as was done in Nakhichevan.

As far as why Ruben Vardanyan was removed as state minister of Artsakh, Sinanyan said that Armenia had nothing to do with his appointment and nothing to do with his removal, but that the Russian factor has more to do with this than anything else. Whatever the case may be, Sinanyan stressed, “I do think that Ruben should not leave Artsakh, because if he does leave Artsakh, this has been arranged to somehow [seem] like Azerbaijan is winning...No Armenian should have to leave Artsakh because Aliyev has demanded it.”

Logistics

Sinanyan was asked about trust and corruption. In return, he related a revealing anecdote about logistics. About eight days before the war, Artsakh President Arayik Harutyunyan’s chief of staff or assistant calls Sinanyan and says, brother, I need to come see you. I need to ask for something. Sinanyan replied, of course brother, come and see me. He comes and says that the situation is dire in Stepanakert, and that they were trying to arm Harutyunyan’s staff. They needed 20 bulletproof vests and came to Sinanyan because his office was the one releasing such items from customs.

Sinanyan said that every evening his office received around 600 vests, which would all go to Artsakh’s Defense Army. The chief of staff replied, well, we are the presidential staff and we don’t know where it goes. I just need 20 vests. Sinanyan promised to give the vests, but realized there is something wrong going on. He called someone in the Defense Army and related the situation. He was told that there is a military warehouse only 5 km. from the presidential palace where 2,000 vests were stored.

This meant that there had been no preparation for war, for decades perhaps. He said, “The people who should have been in the

midst of it, who should have been experts at it, especially people who control logistics, have no idea what they are doing.” In other words, whatever was being sent to Armenia and Artsakh had been misplaced.

On the other hand, today, he said, for the first time in 30 years, Armenia’s Defense Ministry is actually purchasing arms produced by its own manufacturers, and diasporan Armenians have played an important role in this.

Change in Status

Though seen by some as a downgrade in status from its predecessor body which enjoyed ministerial status, Sinanyan has argued in the past that the Office of the High Commissioner largely has benefitted from its non-cabinet status. However, during the question period, he did note one significant item that was removed from the powers that the Diasporan Ministry used to enjoy – directly dealing with the educational needs of the diaspora. This now is handled by the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports. It is clear even from the name of the ministry what a large workload it handles, and Sinanyan pointed out that it is understandable that diasporan school issues tend to be among the last issues that it is able to address. However, the complaints all continue to be made to Sinanyan and his staff.

He noted that the programs he presented in Boston were a product of three years of work, all despite the difficulties of Covid and the 2020 war that had a devastating psychological impact on diasporan-Armenian relations. The funding of his office will hopefully grow as the Armenian GDP grows, allowing an expansion of its activities. The 2018 total state budget, he said, was 2.95 billion dollars, but next year this will be increased to over 6 billion dollars, due to the increase in tax revenue.

He declared that “the idea for the structure, functionality and scope of responsibilities [of his office] has undergone significant change, and it keeps getting refined constantly. It is my understanding that the High Commissioner’s Office would be much more of a go-between or pass-through body that would delegate much of the actual work to various ministries and agencies within the government. Time has proven again and again that unless you have a dedicated entity that deals with specific issues, it becomes an afterthought for the other entity because they have other priorities.”

Pan-Armenian Diasporan Councils

The question of the utility of coordinating bodies for Armenian communities in places like Russia, Ukraine, Belgium, France, the West Coast of the US, and most recently Boston, was raised. Sinanyan commented, “Unfortunately, for the most part, it has been a failure.” He said this was for very specific reasons, continuing, “Once they are formed, they assume that they are the only body. So the coordinating council says... anyone who does not want to come under us or anyone who is not part of us is like a pariah, not a real organization. The moment you do that, you are setting yourself up for miserable failure.” He gave the examples of the Union of Armenians of Russia and the Union of Armenians of Ukraine, which each claimed to be the community in their respective countries. On the other hand, he said that the Belgian example was more agreeable because this group holds democratic elections and does not seem to have the ambition of being the only legitimate Armenian body there. He concluded that if these types of organizations could accept that some individuals or organizations may not wish to necessarily become part of a

pan-Armenian alliance they could be fine.

Polarization

Sinanyan and Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan have been called traitors by some, and in turn Sinanyan has called some political opponents of the current regime traitors. The Armenian government has prohibited the entry of several ARF members in Europe into Armenia. In a follow-up meeting after the Boston community event, Sinanyan was asked how this polarized atmosphere in both Armenia and the diaspora could be ameliorated. Without backing down from a characterization of the previous regimes as corrupt and incompetent, he noted first that he is a nonpartisan official who is not part of the ruling Civil Contract Party, but part of the government team that is headed by the Civil Contract. At the same time, he said he used to be as close as you could ever get to being part of the ARF without actually being a card-carrying member.

He stated that “Those same people call me a traitor – me, a guy who has moved to his homeland, who is working for his country and his people, who has done everything that they were supposed to do. Remember the motto, *Depi yerkir* [Towards the Homeland]? None of them have done it, and they call me that [traitor].”

However, he added that there were a lot of good and dedicated people who perhaps just don’t know the true situation. The solution, he said, is that “So long as we keep the interests of our statehood and our nation above petty political interests, there will be no problem for us to find a way to cooperate, because we have higher common interests. Our common interests are much higher than our lesser political interests.” On his part, he said his own office always keeps the doors open and makes sure that members of opposition parties get invited to its events.

When asked after the formal meeting what he felt was his role during the existential crisis facing Artsakh and Armenia, he responded, “I think of the government, and every person in a leadership position, as a person manning a trench. It is a long trench and each person has to be responsible for a

section of that defense work. I want to concentrate on my trench. At some point, I realize that I don’t have the ability or authority to worry about all the other trenches. I just stay committed to ... what we do, and try to make sure that our part is secure.”

Take-Aways

In answer to a question on what role he thought the US Armenian diaspora should play in connection to Armenia, Sinanyan declared that it should not be based primarily on donor-recipient logic, which has a corrosive effect, turning Armenia into a dependent, and fatiguing the diaspora. “I think that the Armenian American diaspora has so much more to offer [than money],” he said, “and that is in the form of know-how, in the form of expertise, service and advice.” While repatriation would be amazing and fantastic, because that would bring all that expertise permanently to Armenia and broaden the way of thinking and doing things, he cannot ask that much. Instead, he suggested finding greater means to engage more efforts of American-Armenians in Armenia.

Ultimately, Sinanyan declared at the community meeting that the diaspora should be reassured that it is welcome and wanted in Armenia. In fact, it is fundamentally wanted in Armenia no matter what the ups and downs of the relationship, and similarly, the diaspora badly needs Armenia in order to exist.

He said that he is an optimist, both because he is working to build a future for his children in Armenia and because he sees and believes in the efforts of others doing the same. He declared, “We need to come together. We may have differences. We may disagree. I think that is helpful too to disagree but one thing that we have to agree upon is that we have to come out of this victorious – and we have to believe it. And we have to act on it. Just loving Armenia from far away is not enough. Sitting in Armenia, saying that I love Armenia but not doing the right thing, being corrupt, being incompetent, is also not enough. We need to sober up and get to work... everything is at stake.”



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Arts & Culture

State of the Art of The Early Turkish Republic Period: Historiography, Sources and Future Directions Published

FRESNO — The Armenian Studies Program announces the publication of *The State of the Art of the Early Turkish Republic Period: Historiography, Sources and Future Directions*, Volume 17 in the Armenian Series of The Press at California State University, Fresno.

Edited by Barlow Der Mugrdchian, Ümit Kurt, and Ara Sarafian, *The State of the Art of the Early Turkish Republic Period* is the third in the Armenian Studies Program Conference series.

The chapters included in this work were first presented as papers at a conference entitled “The State of the Art of the Early Turkish Republic Period: Historiography, Sources and Future Directions,” held October 2–3, 2020, organized by Prof. Barlow Der Mugrdchian and Dr. Ümit Kurt, and sponsored by the Armenian Studies Program of California State University, Fresno. The papers have since been edited and appear here in a single volume.

The chapters include contributions by Christine Philliou, on “Keynote Address: New Directions in the Early History of the Turkish Republic”; by Ümit Kurt, on “The End of Armenian Aintab and the Rise of a New Turkish Bourgeoisie (1915-1945)”; by Talin Suciyan and Harry Harootunian, on “Abstracting the Peasant in Ottoman and Turkey’s Historiography”; by Ari Şekeryan, on “‘Loyal’ Citizens of the Republic: Revisiting the Nationalist Policies of the Republic of Turkey and the Precarious Situation of the Armenian Community in Istanbul (1923–1928)”; by Christopher Sheklian, on “The Problem-Space of Secularism in the Early Turkish Republic”; by Ayşe Kose Badur, on “A Portrait of a Unionist in the Early Republican Era: Mehmed Cavid (1876–1926)”; and by Hans-Lukas Kieser, an “Afterword: Reassessing the Formation of Post-Lausanne ‘New Turkey.’”

“This is an important book on a topic that has been under-studied,” said Prof. Barlow Der Mugrdchian, general editor of the Armenian Series. “A better understanding of the early Turkish Republic period is essential to understanding Armenian-Turkish relations today.”

“The scholarship on Turkey’s pre-republican history has made great strides over the past three decades, expanding the historical aperture to a plurality of actors and becoming more representative of diverse political, religious, and cultural groups involved in the transition to post-Ottoman Turkey,” said Dr. Hans-Lukas Kieser. “The proliferation of research on late-Ottoman history, including notably the last Ottoman decade, has contributed to a thorough revision of republican Turkey’s foundation in general and of the early Republic in particular. This is scholarly work in see HISTORIOGRAPHY, page 12



The Naghash Ensemble performs at Carnegie Hall.

Naghash Ensemble Lights Up Carnegie Hall

By Florence Avakian

NEW YORK — On March 11, a sold-out house of Armenian and non-Armenian music lovers were treated to a unique and magical style of mystical music by the Naghash Ensemble at the Zankel Hall of Carnegie Hall. The fame of the group was apparent as the huge crowd gave a thunderous ovation as the performers strode onto the stage decorated with large bouquets of spring flowers.

Sponsored by the Eastern Prelacy of the Armenian Church, this event was the 38th Musical Armenia concert that has previously launched the musical careers of budding Armenian artists. Also attending was Armenia’s Ambassador to the United Nations Mher Margaryan.

Archbishop Anoushavan Tanielian, Prelate, called Musical Armenia “a sublime expression of our shared human condition.” Art, he said, “and more specifically music, are perhaps the highest shortcuts to our sense of the divine.”



Naghash Ensemble founder John Hodian

left behind timeless poetry in middle Armenian language. “These poems spoke of war, plague and pestilence, so relevant because they are all happening in today’s world,” said John Hodian, the composer, pianist, director and founder of the Naghash Ensemble.

Hodian spent many years creating this moving music. The inspiration came one day, when he wandered into the ancient Temple of Garni and heard Hasmik Baghdasarian singing medieval Armenian spiritual music. “Her voice was astounding,” he said. “The unique acoustics of Garni, and the beauty of the surroundings haunted me for days afterwards, and I became determined to compose something that would use this sound in a new way.”

Hodian spent months researching in Yerevan, New York, and Berlin libraries until he found a small fragment of a text by priest Mkrtich Naghash. “The words leaped off the page and into my soul,” he said. “I knew I had found my text.” The powerful poems of Naghash on the plight of the ghareeb (the exiled) had a special meaning for Hodian, grandson of Genocide survivors.

‘Songs of Exile’

The performance at Zankel Hall, which combined Armenian, classical, folk, modern and jazz music, was described by eminent composer Tigran Mansurian as “the sound of ancient Armenia reimagined for the 21st century.” It is a “profound rumination on man’s relationship to God from the perspective of a monk forced to live in see NAGHASH, page 13

Dr. Christina Maranci To Speak on Armenian Art Future and Present at Fresno State

FRESNO — Dr. Christina Maranci, Mashtots Chair of Armenian Studies at Harvard University, will speak on “Armenia Art: Current Directions and Future Goals” on Saturday, April 15, at 7 p.m., in the Smittcamp Alumni House, 2625 E. Matoian Way (Shaw and Maple Aves.), on the Fresno State campus. A reception will take place immediately before the lecture starting at 6 p.m. in the Smittcamp Alumni House.

Maranci will give the inaugural lecture in the Grace and Paul Shahinian Armenian Christian Art series organized by the Armenian Studies Program. She will give an overview of the study of Armenian art in the 20th century, with an emphasis on how the discipline has changed over the past several decades. She will also discuss the major sub-disciplines in the field and discuss the future goals of the field.

Maranci grew up in an Armenian family in Westport, Conn. She



Dr. Christina Maranci

earned a B.A. in art history at Vassar, and an M.A. and Ph.D. at Princeton in the Department of Art and Archaeology. Her work explores the art and culture of Armenia in all aspects, but with special emphasis on the late antique and medieval periods. She is the author of four books and over 100 articles and essays on medieval Armenian art and architecture, including most recently, the *Art of Armenia* (Oxford UP, 2018). Her 2015 monograph, *Vigilant Powers: Three Churches of Early Medieval Armenia* (Brepols, 20215) won the Karen Gould Prize for Art History from the Medieval Academy of America and as well as the Sona Aronian Prize for best Armenian Studies monograph from the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR). She is co-founder of East of Byzantium, a workshop and lecture series designed to support graduate students working on the Christian East.

The presentation will also be live-streamed on YouTube at: <https://bit.ly/armenianstudiesyoutube>.

For information about upcoming Armenian Studies Program presentations, please follow us on our Facebook page, @ArmenianStudiesFresnoState or at the Program website, <https://fresnostate.edu/armenian-studies>.



ARTS & CULTURE

Naghash Ensemble Lights Up Carnegie Hall

NAGHASH, from page 12

exile for many years, losing his son in battle, and never seeing his family and friends again,” said Hodian.

The first-class performers included sopranos Hasmik Baghdasarian and Tatevik Movsesyan, alto Arpine Ter-Petrosyan, and instrumentalists Harutyun Chkolyan on *duduk*, *shvi*, *pku*, *zurna*, Aramayis Nikoghosyan on *oud*, and Tigran Hovhannisyan on *dhol*, *daf* and *dumbek*. A poetic Naghash meditation before each song was voiced by Garen Hamamjian, an American-born candidate for the priesthood at New York’s St. Nersess Armenian Seminary.

The dark themes of the songs in the first half of the concert included the modern, jazzy *Meditation on Greed*; the thoughtful and brilliantly harmonic *If in this World by Sin You Wander*, with Baghdasaryan as a standout; the soul-searing *Lamentations on the Death of a Child*; and the mystical and exotic *Woe to Those That Keep a Grudge*.

All songs were very rhythmic with recognizable Armenian undertones, and they reflected the anxiety of today’s world. The instrumentalists especially expressed the heartfelt Armenian feeling, with the singers also creating emotional body and hand movements as they performed. There was also a definite beat and modernistic flavor appealing to today’s generation.

The performance continued with the evocative *Another Answer*; the haunting *Work of Darkness*; and finally, the slow and mournful start of *Lamentations for the Dead* evolving to frantic speed and action. The repetitive style of the music persisted, but there was Armenian feeling throughout. An encore was performed to the delight of the audience, the lilting *Armenian Lullaby*, dedicated to all women putting a baby to sleep.

If there was anything missing in the performance, it was the spiritual and mystical words of the poems by Naghash and Erznkatsi that should have accompanied the

music. Had it been distributed to the audience, it would have greatly enhanced the powerful meaning of the presentation.

Following a thunderous standing ovation lasting several minutes, Hodian introduced the musicians, all born in Yerevan, who voiced their individual feelings. He also expressed his deep appreciation to the Eastern Armenian Prelacy, Archbishop Anoushavan, and the Musical Armenia Committee for their dedication to the musicians and their hard work preceding the performance.

Naghash Ensemble

Mkrtich Naghash was the bishop of Amida (present day Diyarbakir) during the 15th century, a time when Armenians lived in dispersion, far from their ancestral lands. When the Armenian state vanished with the fall of Cilicia in 1375, Naghash became a respected figure by all groups. He was honored not only by Armenians, but also by Turks, Arabs, Kurds, Jews and many others. He was widely famous for his manuscript illuminations.

“The voice of Naghash calls on us to rely on each other to reaffirm the ties that bind individuals into communities, even in uncertain times of our own.” Hodian, the creator of the Naghash Ensemble, has been mainly performing in classical venues. “I grew up as an Armenian, but my background is Western music. Born in Philadelphia, he received his master’s degree in composition and conducting at the Philadelphia College for the Performing Arts. He has been the conductor of the Philadelphia New Music Ensemble and has conducted several European orchestras.

He has also been selected as a resident composer for the Sundance Theater Institute and has collaborated with celebrated theater figures. He is a two-time winner of the New Dramatist Award for musical theater.

Since moving to Armenia in 2005, he has spent the last 15 years composing music for The Naghash Ensemble.

“The musical conceptions of these wonderful artists performing tonight, and the profound lyricism of Mkrtich Naghash and Kostandin Erznkats’i have been my guides,” he commented.

Leading soprano Baghdasaryan is Armenia’s main performer of medieval spiritual music. She has performed and recorded with many of Armenia’s finest ensembles and contemporary composers. She calls the Naghash Ensemble’s music the “most beautiful music I have ever sung. These compositions reach down into the deepest corners of the soul and translate them back to the world as music.”

Soprano Tatevik Movsesyan has won international acclaim for her outstanding performances of chamber music. She is a graduate of the acclaimed Komitas State Conservatory.

Alto Arpi Ter-Petrosyan has a remarkable vocal range and possesses the deepest female voice in Armenia. She graduated from the State Educational Khachatur Abovyan University in Yerevan, and recently has gained a great international following as “Arpi Alto.”

Multi-instrumentalist Harutyun Chkolyan, a specialist in Armenian folk wind instruments, graduated from the Komitas State Conservatory, and now teaches there. He has also performed with several international orchestras.

Oudist Aramayis Nikoghosyan began playing the *oud* at age six. He completed his education at Romanos Melikyan College of Music, and later attended the Komitas State Conservatory. He has performed with many outstanding Music Ensembles.

A master of *dhol* and *dumbek*, Tigran Hovhannisyan performs with the Armenian National Orchestra. He was a prize-winning student at the Henrik Igityan Music School for Folk Instruments and at the Romanos Melikyan College of Music. He also is a sought-after teacher of percussion instruments.

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ARTS & CULTURE

George Kirazian's 'Book of Ruth' Ballet Premiere in April

SAN DIEGO —Composer George Kirazian's new ballet based on the *Book of Ruth* will be produced by Mojalet Dance Collective and premiering in San Diego on April 29-30.

"The Book of Ruth: A Ballet," will be choreographed by Faith Jensen-Ismay, Mojalet's founder and artistic director. Based on the Old Testament story of the Hebrew woman Ruth and her family, the new work will combine traditional and modern dance components, choreographed by Jensen-Ismay to Kirazian's music, recorded by the Parnassus Ensemble of San Diego.

Mojalet Dance Collective has been entertaining and inspiring San Diego audiences for more than 30 years with traditional, modern and contemporary dance productions, including many world premieres, as they are dedicated to developing new and groundbreaking work. They are also developing "The Book of Ruth: A Ballet," for a larger-scale production in Fall 2023.

The Book of Ruth in the Old Testament might well be the world's first short story. When the elder Jewish woman Naomi loses her husband and both her sons, she implores both her widowed daughters-in-law to go back to their native land of Moab. One of them, Orpah, leaves. The other, Ruth, insists on staying with her mother-in-law Naomi, to embrace her people and her God. They go to Judah, where after a period of poverty, they meet a generous landowner named Boaz, who changes their lives. The story teaches its audience that love and devotion can heal after great losses and enable us to rise above our harmful prejudices against others. Although Ruth's story has often been retold and depicted in films, it has never been set to music as a ballet.

A longtime member of the Armenian

community who helped establish the first Armenian Church in San Diego, composer Kirazian is a retired college instructor of Humanities, Composition, and Opera Appreciation. Born and raised in New Jersey, he completed his undergraduate and graduate studies at New York University and taught English Literature and Composition at Grossmont College for nearly 40 years, and served as Chairman of the English Department. He also taught Opera and Music Appreciation at San Diego State University. He is a longtime resident of San Diego with his wife Dikranouhi. They have three daughters: Yvette (husband John Harpootian), Andrea (husband Steven Urrutia) and Lisa (husband Steve Kradjian), and six grandchildren: Mark, Eric, Zari, Dante, Ani and Mari.

Kirazian's musical compositions include "The Book of Ruth: A Ballet," various art songs, hymns, and a new version of *The Divine Liturgy of the Armenian Apostolic Church*, which has been performed and recorded by Pacific Camerata of San Diego, the Paros Chamber Choir of Armenia, and also performed by members of the Armenian Church of San Diego. He has also published fiction and non-fiction: *Easy Writing: A Practical Guide for Practically Everybody*; *A Time for Fathers* (short novel), and five young reader books: *The Sleeping Violet*, *Perry the Peacock*, *Beyond the Koala Kingdom*, *Leo and the Mulberry Flute*, and *The Princess of December*. His website is georgekirazian.com.

The four premiere performances of the ballet will be April 29, 4:30 and 7 p.m.; and April 30, 2 p.m. and 4:30 p.m., at The Vine Arts Village, Oaks North Plaza, 12540 Oaks North Dr., San Diego. The performances will be combined with three other original dance pieces, "After-



Dancers from "Book of Ruth"

math," "Tainted" and "A New Solo." A reception will be held in between each day's performances, as well as a brief

Q&A after each show.

For more information and tickets, visit <https://www.mojalet.com/bookofruth>.



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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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ARTS & CULTURE

Recipe Corner



by Christine Vartanian

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Stuffed Eggplant (Melitzanes Papoutsakia)

This recipe and photos are courtesy of Ms. Eli K. Giannopoulos, the gifted food writer and blogger at My Greek Dish. “If you’re looking for a meal that’s packed with good taste and flavor, then here it is. This traditional recipe for Melitzanes Papoutsakia (Greek Stuffed Eggplant) is an easy meal that you can make any night of the week, and it’s great for meal-prep,” says Eli.

“This classic Greek recipe will amaze your guests, it literally means, ‘little slippers’. Papoutsakia are also a popular item at the annual Eat Like A Greek Food Faire in Santa Cruz, CA. The taste and ingredients used are similar to Greek <<https://www.mygreekdish.com/recipe/mousakas/>> moussaka,” adds Eli. “To prepare this recipe, the eggplants are first seasoned and baked until soft and sweet, then stuffed with a rich tomato-based meat sauce, topped with a cheesy béchamel sauce, and baked to golden perfection. Serve this dish with a Greek salad and crusty bread, and your guests will always remember the first time they tasted it.”

“Kefalotyri or kefalotiri is a traditional cheese made from sheep milk and/or goat’s milk in Greece and Cyprus, dating back to the Byzantine era. It is a hard, light-yellow cheese with a sharp flavor and dry texture. The color varies from yellow to white depending upon the mixture of milk used. Young cheeses are aged for a minimum of two to three months, whereas aged Kefalotyri can be a year old or more with a dry, stronger flavor.”

- INGREDIENTS:
- 5 medium eggplants
 - 18 oz. minced beef
 - 1 large red onion, finely chopped
 - 2 garlic cloves, finely chopped
 - 1 glass Anthos red wine or your favorite red wine*
 - 1 tin (about 14 oz.) chopped tomatoes or tomato juice (passata)**
 - 1 cinnamon stick
 - A pinch of sugar
 - 1 teaspoon oregano
 - 3.5 oz. grated Kefalotyri or any hard yellow cheese***
 - Olive oil
 - Salt and freshly ground pepper
 - 2-3 tablespoons chopped parsley
- For the béchamel sauce:
- 3.5 oz. butter
 - 3.5 oz. flour
 - 3 3/4 cup warmed milk
 - 2 egg yolks
 - A pinch of nutmeg
 - Salt to taste

PREPARATION:

Note: The eggplants are the star of this dish, so look for eggplants at your local grocery store or farmers market that are firm to the touch and a rich, dark purple. Avoid eggplants that are too soft or speckled with bad spots. Wash thoroughly before preparing this recipe.

Cut the eggplants in two pieces and carve them crosswise (the flesh). Season the eggplants and place them in a colander for about half an hour. Wash them with plenty of water and drain them on some paper towels.

Preheat the oven at about 392°F. Season the eggplants with salt and pepper and drizzle with olive oil. Place the eggplants (with the skin facing up) on a baking tray lined with parchment paper. Bake the eggplants for 40 minutes or until softened.

In the meantime, prepare the meat sauce: Peel and chop the onions and garlic. Place a large pan on medium heat, add some olive oil and the onions and sauté until softened. Stir in the garlic and sauté. Turn the heat up, add the minced beef breaking it up with your spoon and sauté. Deglaze with the red wine and wait 1-2 minutes to evaporate. Stir in the canned tomatoes, the cinnamon stick, a pinch of sugar, the oregano, and season. Bring to the boil, turn the heat down and simmer with the lid on for about 30 minutes, until most of the juices have evaporated. At the end, add 1-2 handfuls grated cheese and chopped parsley, and stir. Remove the cinnamon stick.

Prepare the béchamel sauce for the stuffed eggplant:

Use a large pan to melt some butter over low-medium heat. Add the flour whisking continuously to make a paste. Add warmed milk in a steady stream; keep whisking in order to prevent your sauce from getting lumpy. If the sauce still needs to thicken, boil over low heat while continuing to stir. Remove the pan from the stove, stir in the egg yolks and season with salt, pepper, and a pinch of nutmeg. Whisk quickly in order to prevent the eggs from turning into an omelet. Season with salt to taste.

Layer the eggplants at the bottom of a baking pan with the skin down. Remove some of the flesh, to make room for the filling. Sprinkle the eggplants with grated cheese and spoon the meat sauce on top of each piece. Top with the béchamel sauce (or mashed potatoes) and sprinkle with grated cheese. Bake for 20 minutes or until nicely golden colored.

New Children’s Book Series ‘Growing Up Proud’ Celebrates Armenian Culture and Tradition

LOS ANGELES — Steve Boyadzhyan, an Armenian-American author, has launched a new children’s book series, “Growing Up Proud,” now available on Amazon. The series is focused on teaching young Armenian children about their culture, tradition, and the importance of healthy habits, inclusivity, following dreams, and being helpful to others.

The series currently includes four books, *Jace The Armenian Boy Who Loves... Healthy Habits*, *Sienna The Armenian Girl’s... World Adventures*, *Jace The Armenian Boy Who... Reaches For The Stars* and *Sienna The Armenian Girl Who... Loves to Help*. Each book highlights a different value and lesson for children, encouraging them to embrace their Armenian identity and celebrate their unique heritage.

With the upcoming Easter holiday, Boyadzhyan has also released two new

books in the series, *Sienna The Armenian Girl’s...Easter Celebrations* and *Jace The Armenian Boy’s...EGG-Citing Easter*. Additionally, as April marks Armenian History Month, these books serve as an excellent tool for celebrating the rich culture, history, and identity of Armenian people.

Boyardzhyan, who is passionate about educating young children about their culture and tradition, said, “I’m thrilled to share the ‘Growing Up Proud’ series with Armenian children across the diaspora. Through these books, I hope to instill a sense of pride and love for their Armenian identity and heritage. My goal is to inspire young readers to be confident, inclusive, and compassionate individuals who will contribute to making the world a better place.”

To purchase the “Growing Up Proud” series, visit [Amazon.com/author/steveboy](https://www.amazon.com/author/steveboy)



ARTS & CULTURE

There Could Have Been a Calouste Gulbenkian Museum in Washington, D.C.

By Haykaram Nahapetyan

Mirror-Spectator Video Correspondent

WASHINGTON — In the late 1920s, when the Soviet Union embarked on the task of rapid development of its industry, it quickly realized the money for implementing the large projects envisaged was lacking. Industrialization required a lot of financial resources, and one of the options with which the Soviets tried to fill the gap was the sale of masterpieces from the USSR's museums, particularly from the main museum of Leningrad (modern day St. Petersburg), known as the Hermitage.

Several Armenians played an interesting role in this enterprise, both in the USSR and outside. Some sources suggest that between 1928 and 1935, the Soviets sold 24 thousand artworks, including 2,800 paintings from the Hermitage. British-American historian Dr. Jonathan Conlin noted that the Armenian billionaire and art collector Calouste Gulbenkian became the first “to go shopping at the Hermitage Museum.”

“In total, he paid 17 million dollars in today's values to the Soviet Union,” noted Dr. Conlin in an e-communication. Gulbenkian's main competitor, who also purchased artifacts from the USSR, was an American businessman and benefactor, Andrew Mellon, who also served as the US Secretary of Treasury when the transactions were taking place. Dr. Conlin, who authored a monograph about Gulbenkian, tracked differences between the approaches of Gulbenkian and Mellon in selecting artifacts from Russia.

“With Mellon, I very much have the sense that he was basically ticking famous artists off a list that other people have written. In the case of Gulbenkian, he does go after some very well-known artists like Rembrandt, but he also acquires examples of silverware by 18th century French silversmiths as well as some other pieces which by no means were obvious choices,” noted Conlin, adding that the choices he made really do reflect that the Gulbenkian

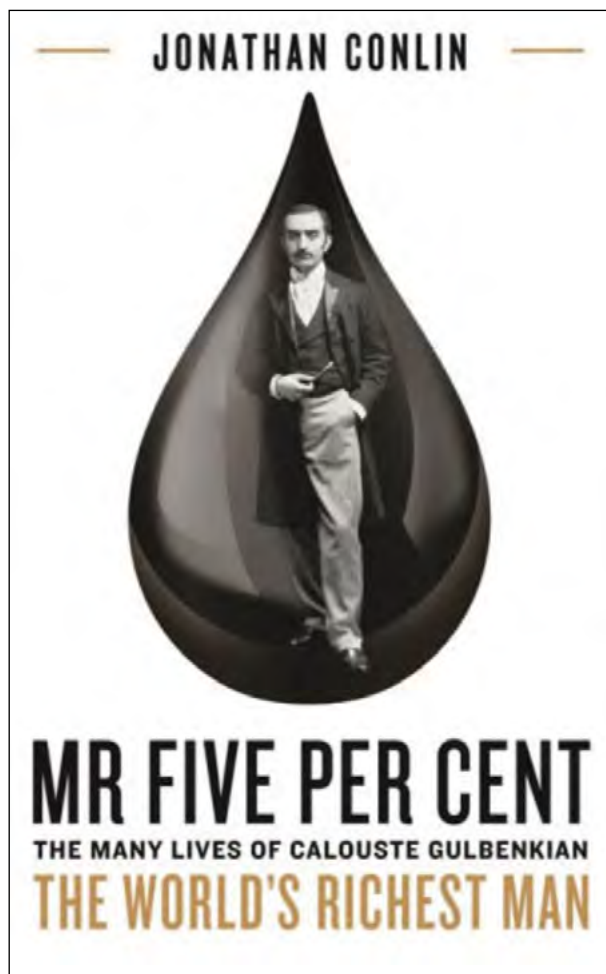


Calouste Gulbenkian

collections were formed by Gulbenkian himself.

Gulbenkian acquired some Armenian artifacts. However, the core of Gulbenkian's collection represented masterpieces like “Pallas Athena” and “Titus” by Rembrandt Harmenszoon van Rijn (17th century), “Helena Fourment” by Peter Paul Rubens (17th century), Dirk Bouts' “Annunciation” (15th century), and the sculpture of the Greek goddess “Diana” by French sculptor Jean-Antoine Houdon (18th-19th centuries).

The Armenian oil magnate had established relations with the Soviets earlier when he helped the new Soviet republic sell Russia's oil in the international markets. Back then and later, he worked with Georgy Pyatakov, the trade representative of the Soviets in Paris. Pyatakov, in his turn, often reported to Anastas Mikoyan, the Soviet minister for foreign trade. Some sources suggest that Stalin wanted Mikoyan to work directly with Gulbenkian as both were Armenians.



The director of the Hermitage, Boris Legran, didn't dare to convey his concerns to the Soviet leadership about selling the masterpieces. But his deputy, Joseph (Hovsep) Orbeli, a Soviet-Armenian historian and orientalist, did. In 1932, Orbeli sent a letter to Stalin asking not to sell the ancient Persian artifacts. The Persian pieces most probably would be sold to Gulbenkian as well. On October 25, Orbeli received Stalin's reply: the Foreign Trade Department was instructed not to sell ancient oriental artifacts of the museum anymore.

March 18, 2022, marked the 135th anniversary of Orbeli's birth. Not coincidentally, an exhibition on Persia was launched at the Hermitage. As was mentioned in one of Russia's mainstream publications, if not for Orbeli, the Persian exhibit of the 21st century might not take place, implying that the Armenian academician saved the treasures of the ancient Orient from being sold. The records suggest that Orbeli not only saved Oriental artifacts. After having Stalin's approval, the Hermitage's curators decided to recatalog European valuables as Oriental artifacts to safeguard them from possible sales.

In 1934, Stalin made Orbeli the director of the Hermitage. During World War II, when the Nazis besieged the city of Leningrad and were bombing the museum, he stayed in the town and played a crucial role in saving the masterpieces of the Hermitage. In 1945, during the trial of the Nazi criminals in Nuremberg, Orbeli testified about Nazi attacks against his museum. When the lawyer of the Nazis asked, “Does he think the Luftwaffe hit Hermitage purposefully or by accident?” Orbeli answered, “I am not a military expert, but I can suggest the following: 30 Nazi bombs hit the Hermitage during the war, and only 1 hit the bridge in our vicinity.”

Between 1943 and 1947, Hovsep Orbeli also served as the first president of Soviet Armenia's Academy of Sciences.

It is controversial, but it is a fact: Calouste Gulbenkian, one of the main buyers of the treasures from the Hermitage, also tried to prevent the sales of the masterpieces by the Soviets. On July 18, 1930, Gulbenkian wrote to Pyatakov: “You might ask, why am doing this, considering that I am the one who is trying to buy the artifacts. Perhaps you remember that I have always recommended and continue suggesting now that your government should not sell museum artifacts.” Per Gulbenkian, the museum's artifacts carry great educational importance and serve as a source of great national pride. “If word of their sale were to get out, it would harm your government's credit,” he suggested.

After his death, the Calouste Gulbenkian Museum was set up in Lisbon, Portugal, where the collection was

opened for public display. However, Dr. Conlin noted that initially, the Armenian art collector considered three other major locations: Washington, D.C., New York, and London. In Washington, a building between the National Gallery of Art and the Capitol Building was planned, and, per Dr. Conlin, a basic sketch of this venue was made. Evidently, the negotiations with New York's Metropolitan Museum and London's Museum advanced a bit further. Dr. Conlin found a 1940s photograph of the proposed “Gulbenkian Annex” model at the National Gallery, London, which would have stood to the west of the main building on London's Trafalgar Square, which is the heart of the city.

The parties disagreed on the design of the display. Gulbenkian wanted all his artifacts to be exhibited at one location. Contrary to that, the museum authorities insisted that each piece should be placed next to other related artifacts. As a result, none of those projects came into existence, and the Gulbenkian treasures ended up and continue to be displayed in Lisbon.

Andrew Mellon pursued a similar goal. He wanted Washington to have a gallery of art like the English gallery established in the 19th century. With that vision, he purchased about 20 paintings from the Soviet government, paying about \$120 million in today's nominations. The construction of the gallery started on the National Mall in 1937. Mellon's endeavor was again not without Armenian engagement.

I visited the Keshishian rug store in Rockville, Maryland to learn more about this project. Mark Keshishian, the current owner, told me and showed evidence that before moving to Maryland, the Keshishian rug dealers ran their store in Washington, D.C., not far from where Andrew Mellon lived. James Keshishian, the father of Mark and one of the earlier owners of the family business, left memoirs that Mark showed me. James noted that in the 1930s, the US government rented the two stories of the Keshishian rug store. “There were three federal officers on duty at the elevator and the stair doors next to the elevator. The two sat facing each other at the doors on the second and third floor,” recorded Jim Keshishian in the family history book.

The US federal officers carried pistols and Thompson submachine guns. “They would take the bullet holding drum off to clean them, and they'd let me hold them. They were very heavy,” wrote Jim Keshishian in the family history account. But what were the federal officers protecting at the Armenian-American store?

“There were a lot of framed paintings deposited against the walls on the two floors. They were stacked four, five, and six deep against each other. People would rearrange them from time to time,” wrote Keshishian in his memoirs. As he would find out later, the Mellons kept the masterpieces on the two stories of the Keshishian rug store building.

The Mellons themselves lived close by, on two stores of the six-story building on what is now known as McCormick Apartments, aka the Andrew Mellon building, on 1785 Massachusetts Avenue. Another resident of that same building was art dealer Joseph Duveen. In 1936, a year before his death, Mellon paid 21 million dollars to Duveen to obtain his paintings and sculptures. Per *National Geographic Traveler*, at the time, this was the biggest transaction on record. Most probably, it was after this purchase that Mellons decided to rent the two stories of the Armenian rug store. Jim Keshishian believes the Mellons rented part of their rug store in 1936.

Paul Mellon, the son of Andrew Mellon, knew Mark Keshishian the senior, the store owner at that time, personally. The Keshishians also lived nearby on Church Street, and the Keshishian store serviced the Mellon family's rugs at home.

Andrew Mellon did not live long enough to see the opening of the National Gallery of Art. It opened on March 17, 1941, in the presence of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt and Paul Mellon. As noted earlier, the Gulbenkian museum could have been adjacent to it.

The Armenian presence in such a significant project as the sales of artifacts from the Hermitage and the foundation of the National Gallery of Art on the National Mall is a fascinating story to be recorded and further researched.

For the accompanying video to this article, visit our website, mirrorspectator.com

COMMENTARY

Jack Vahram Kalpakian:

A Sudanese Armenian Professor from Morocco

By Artsvi Bakhchinyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN/IFRANE, Morocco — My research of history of Armenians in Africa led to finding interesting compatriots from various African states. One of them is Dr.



Jack Vahram Kalpakian, an associate professor of International Studies at School of Humanities and Social Sciences, Al Akhawayn University in Ifrane, Morocco. Born in Sudan and a naturalized United States citizen, Kalpakian

completed his undergraduate degree at Santa Clara University in California. He holds a doctorate in international studies from Old Dominion University, Norfolk, Va. He specializes in security studies, international political economy and the Middle East/North Africa region. Kalpakian is the author of academic papers in English and Arabic, covering the issues of terrorism, international security, international political economy, water issues, North Africa, Middle East, and East Africa.

Jack, let's first discuss some issues related to your profession. How advanced is international studies as academic field in Morocco and does it have any impact on politics?

International relations is traditionally taught here as a branch of law, not necessarily a social science. It has been a branch of law, and the approach was very French, but Akhawayn University in Ifrane strove to offer International relations as a social science in order to expand the number of people who are engaged in international affairs in the country. The aim of the discipline is not political but rather oriented towards internationalization.

With UN's establishment the humankind was thinking that its dream of global security will become reality. Yet many wars followed to it, and now the international situation is far from being secure. Especially in our region. Probably the mankind needs another approach to avoid new big wars and finally reach in-

ternational security?

The threats of disease, famine, climate change and extremism are not to be trifled with. The fundamental obstacle to solutions is that the US, China, and Russia tend to view each other's existence as a problem. It is very difficult for the likes of Victoria Nuland, her husband and her ultimate boss, Biden, to wrap their head around the idea that they have bigger problems than Putin.

Two years ago, I read Tigran Yeghayan's interesting analytical research, Minorities of Orient, where the author shows the uncertain future of non-Muslim population of Middle East. How is the situation in the countries of Maghreb?

The Amazigh (Berbers) are not a minority in any sense of the word in any four Maghrebian states. They are very well integrated and may in reality be the majority community in all four main states, where language separated from the issue. The Jewish community has disappeared save for Tunisia and Morocco and even then, the numbers are very small.

Do you follow the situation in Armenia and what do you think about current developments?

Yes, I do. I view the current developments as the logical outcome of external intervention in Armenian affairs, which sadly began during the Cold War with now acknowledged intervention in Church affairs.

How did the Kalpakian family end up in Sudan?

Through Egypt. My grandfather's cousin, Philip Kalpakian from Arabkir, had arrived long before the genocide, in 1906 and sent agents to retrieve the survivors. By the 1930s, they had found his cousin in Cairo living as a refugee, and he migrated to Sudan.

How was it to grow up as an Armenian in Sudan?

Not easy. While there is a lot of good to say about the Sudanese peoples, there are plenty of religious fanatics among them and some of these went as far as to stone my sister and I while we played in my father's truck in our birthplace Gedarif. My sister was injured and had a scar on her forehead... she was barely five. My parents moved to Khartoum largely due to this incident.

Now you live in Morocco, a country where there was a small Armenian community in 1920-1980s. What about now?

There is or was an Ararat House in Casablanca, and its people called me; it is a private home owned by a French-Armenian family. They open their home once a month to all Armenians. But I live and work in a place that is far from Casablanca. There is a merchant in Marrakech called Johnny Chatarjian. He is married to a Moroccan woman and they have kids, and typically. Beyond that, it is very much like me, isolated individuals. I speak Western Armenian with my daughter. She speaks Flemish with her mother. Now there is a member of the Bulbulian Family who was close to me. French Armenians used to come here very often, especially Genocide survivors because the terrain looks a lot like Western Armenia.

One of your favorite quotes is "We exist, we will continue to exist and we will multiply" by Barouyr Sevak. But how? In Armenia and Diaspora many have few children due to various motivations, unlike our neighbors whose number is increasing drastically.

Have they "increased drastically?" Tur-

CALENDAR

OF EVENTS & PROGRAMS

CALIFORNIA

APRIL 13 — Opening reception for "Gojabashian: Blessed Hands of the Armenian Heritage" art exhibition, Leon S. Peters Ellipse Gallery, University Library, Fresno State University. 6-7 p.m. Artist Yervant Gojabashian is one of Armenia's most prominent sculptors and painters. Admission free.

CONNECTICUT

APRIL 22 — The Armenian Genocide Commemoration Committee of Connecticut will hold its annual program, on the 108th anniversary of the Genocide, on Saturday April 22 2023 at 11:00 am. The event will take place at the historic Connecticut House Chamber at the State Capitol, 210 Capitol Avenue, Hartford. The program will include the Martyrs' Service, which was created in 2015 on the occasion of the centennial of the Genocide and the canonization of the Martyrs. Clergy from Armenian Churches in Connecticut will participate in the service. The keynote speaker will be Aram Hamparian, Executive Director of the Armenian National Committee of America, (ANCA). A reception will follow the commemoration. For questions call Melanie at 860-651-0629

MASSACHUSETTS

APRIL 10 — Monday, St. James Monthly Dinner & Fellowship, Joint meeting with the Knights of Vartan, Guest Speaker Jason Sohigian, Executive Director of the Armenian Museum of America. Losh Kebab and Kheyma Dinner. Social Hour [mezza] 6:15, Dinner 7 p.m., \$20 per person. St. James Armenian Apostolic Church, 465 Mt. Auburn St. Watertown. 617 923-8860.

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

APRIL 18 — "Opening Reception: From Cambridge to Yerevan: 35 Years of Friendship" exhibit of the Cambridge Yerevan Sister City Association, featuring the long term board members of the organization taking a trip down memory lane. The exhibit features documents, photos and posters connected to CYSCA's 35th anniversary. The exhibit can be viewed for free on the first floor. Tuesday, 7 to 8.30 p.m., Main Library Community Room, 449 Broadway, Cambridge. Light refreshments will be served. All are welcome. Registration required at www.cambridgepl.libcal.com/

MAY 9-13 — The VEM Ensemble, the cornerstone of the Armenian Music Program at the UCLA Herb Alpert School of Music and under the artistic leadership of Founder/Director Movses Pogossian, consists of the VEM String Quartet and mezzo-soprano Lena Marandi. They will have concerts on May 9 in Southfield, Mich., May 11 in at Holy Trinity Armenian Church (co-sponsored by Holy Trinity), and May 13 in Montreal. Details to follow.

OCTOBER 27-28 — SAVE THE DATE. The Armenian Mirror-Spectator will celebrate its 90th anniversary with two programs, a panel featuring top-notch journalists on October 27 and a banquet on October 28. Details to follow.

NEW JERSEY

MAY 10 — The Armenian Missionary Association of America will host a book presentation by Adrienne G. Alexanian on her father's memoirs, Forced into Genocide: Memoirs of an Armenian Soldier in the Ottoman Turkish Army. Venue/ Time - AMAA Headquarters, 31 West Century Road, Paramus. 7 p.m. Registration requested - Call Magda Poulos at (201) 265-2607 x 107 or e-mail mpoulos@amaa.org Book signing during reception. All proceeds from the sale of books will benefit the AMAA Syrian Relief Fund.

MAY 13 — Save the Date! The Tekeyan Cultural Association Mher Megerdichian Theatrical Group will mark its 25th anniversary with a gala. Details to follow.

Send Calendar Items to the Mirror-Spectator: To send calendar items to the Mirror-Spectator, email alin@mirrorspectator.com or alin.gregorian@gmail.com. You can also visit our website, www.mirrorspectator.com, and find the "calendar" section under the heading "More." You can also mail them to the Armenian Mirror-Spectator, 755 Mount Auburn St., Watertown, MA 02472. All calendar entries must be received by noon on Monday before publication. There is no fee for calendar entries.

State of the Art of the Early Turkish Republic Period

HISTORIOGRAPHY, from page 12 progress that grasps the republican nation-state as a post-genocidal polity."

Copies of *The State of the Art of the Early Turkish Republic Period* are available for purchase from: Abril Bookstore, <http://www.abrilbooks.com/books/state-of-the-art-of-the-early-turkish-republic-period-the.html> or the National Association for Armenian Studies & Research (NAASR) Bookstore, <https://naasr.org/products/the-state-of-the-art-of-the-early-turkish-republic-historiography-sources-and-future-directions>

All of the books in the Armenian Series can be found at the following website: <https://cah.fresnostate.edu/armenianstudies/resources/armenianseries/index.html>

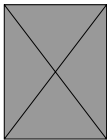
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key's demographics are imperiled. Azerbaijan's numbers are suspect. The key is to set up colonies in safe states and concentrate people in them. Glendale is not the solution ultimately because of the forces of assimilation. Armenians should look at models like Kiryat Joel, NY (now Palm Tree, New York) but on a more expansive basis. There are plenty of counties emp-

tying in the Midwest in the US, and these are ripe for colonization with Armenian communities, farms, and towns. There is nothing in United States law that prevents Armenian Americans from helping themselves to these areas. Add a private safety net, religious motivation, and the legal use of tax revenue in the service of the community, the prospects are great.



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COMMENTARY

Are Russia, Iran and China Creating A New Informal Alliance?

By Suren Sargsyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

On March 15, naval forces from China, Iran and Russia joined together in drills, as China’s Defense Ministry released a statement. On March 20, Chinese President Xi Jinping visited Moscow, becoming one of the most significant and influential world leaders visiting Russia since the beginning of the Ukraine war. On March 21, Iran’s supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, said that the United States is not interested in putting an end to the war in Ukraine, which he maintains the Western military alliance created. Moreover, earlier this month, China mediated an agreement between Iran and Saudi Arabia that is expected to result within weeks in the two rivals restoring their diplomatic relations after seven years. In the process, Beijing has positioned itself as a new political player in the region. It appears that a new informal alliance has already been formed, mainly targeting US interests in Eurasia and the Middle East at large.

The reaction from Washington was pretty calm. US National Security Council spokesperson John Kirby said that the White House was not concerned by the joint training exercise. Kirby said the US and other nations conduct training exercises all the time and this won’t be the first time that the Russians and Chinese have trained together. “We’re going to watch it, we’ll monitor it, obviously, to make sure that there’s no threat resulting from this training exercise to our national security interests or those of our allies and partners in the region,” Kirby said, “But nations train. We do it all the time. We’ll watch it as best we can.” It should be fair to note that he is right, and military exercises are a normal phenomenon, but the problem is that now the military exercises are taking place at a time of extreme tension between Russia, Iran and China on the one hand and the collective West on the other hand. Russia, China, and Iran are countries with diverse interests and complex relationships with the United States. While they may not have a formal alliance, they have been known to co-operate in various ways to challenge the influence and power of the US. Russia, China, and Iran are all major regional powers that seek to advance their interests and expand their influence. They view the US as a global superpower that has historically challenged their interests, and thus may seek to cooperate to counterbalance US influence. The US and these three countries have different political systems and ideologies. Russia, China, and Iran may view the US as a threat to their own political systems and may therefore work together to challenge US-led norms and processes.

The US is a major economic power and competitor to China, and places significant pressure and economic sanctions against Iran and Russia. Naturally, these countries may co-

operate to protect their economic interests and challenge the dominance of the US in global politics, security architecture and economy. At the same time, Russia, China, and Iran are quite concerned and nervous about seeing the US as a security threat due to US military presence in regions of strategic importance to them, such as the Middle East and the Asia-Pacific region. It is obvious that these three states individually cannot compete with the US, let alone the collective West, and there is an important motivation for them to unite in the common challenge to reduce American influence. Seeing this global picture, we need to realize that the South Caucasus region is strategically important for Iran, Russia, and China due to its energy resources, geopolitical location, transport routes, security concerns, and cultural ties. All these countries have been pursuing various economic and political strategies to advance their interests in the region. Russia and Iran are especially worried about the increasing significance of the Turkish role in the region as a result of the 2020 Karabakh war. Turkey, no matter how important a partner it is for Moscow and Tehran, is still considered as a US ally in the region and a member state of NATO, having one of the most powerful armed forces in this alliance and poses a serious challenge to Russia and Iran.

Considering all of the above, the answer to the question about the possibility of Russia, Iran and China creating a new informal alliance is that this scenario is possible. First of all, China has a policy of not joining any formal alliances, which means that an informal alliance is acceptable for it if there is a mutual benefit to be gained with any state. Moreover, China is trying to position itself not only as a global economy but also as a global political player. In that regard, China might be interested in this kind of alliance with Russia and Iran to counterbalance the West. In their turn, Russia and Iran need China as a global economy, taking into consideration Western sanctions on their economies. Strong partnership in the economy may lead to a stronger partnership in the political arena. So, it may be concluded that the prospect of such an informal unification has become possible as a result of China’s growing economy and the US policy of driving Russia and Iran into a corner on all sides. At the end of the day, despite all contradictions, Russia, China and Iran are united by one target, the United States, and its influence in the Middle East, South Caucasus and Central Asia.

(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.)

Remembering Dennis Papazian

By Harry A. Kezelian III

The scene is in an old-fashioned dining room, decorated with antique furniture and an oriental rug. Green holly and red ribbons deck the walls and cabinets, indicating that it is Christmas. The yellowish light bulbs give the room a warmth contrasting with the darkness outside, and reflect the snow falling outside the windows.

It is American Christmas Eve in the Kezelian household, circa 1994, a festive celebration to which some 50 family and friends, Armenians and non-Armenian, were invited. As the various “aunties” cleared the tables and began washing the dishes, the kids scrambled to other rooms to play, and the middle-aged men stood around talking about the stock market or the weather or who was playing in the Rose Bowl, three elder patriarchs seated themselves at the head of the dining room table and with their after-dinner coffee (and perhaps some *ghourabia* or *pakhlava*), began the really serious discussions. Seated in the middle, that is, at the head of the table, is my grand-

father, Harry A. Kezelian, Sr., known as “Papa Harry,” a genial, slightly rotund man of about 70 with a red sweater-vest and a thinning head of grey hair above his squarish-round face and thick glasses. A successful small business owner who propelled his family into the upper middle class with the dry cleaning business, he is a man of the people, but self-educated and interested in Armenian and world affairs on all levels. With his collection of *National Geographic* magazines and his ability to read and write Armenian, rare for someone born in Detroit, he was the one who facilitated these discussions at his and his wife’s annual Christmas Eve party at the new home in swanky Bloomfield Hills which they had purchased only five years before. It was a long way from “Zone Nine” where he had grown up and where until the age of 4 he had lived in one tiny room with his father and mother in the back of his father’s shoe repair shop. Though not educated beyond high school, he enjoyed intellectual discussions. Not only giving back to the community but being educated on its affairs, for him was one

of the purposes of material success. In this aspect, he was like the character of Tevye in “Fiddler on the Roof,” who sang in “If I Were a Rich Man”:

*If I were rich, I’d have the time that I lack
To sit in the synagogue and pray
And maybe have a seat by the Eastern wall*

*And I’d discuss the holy books with the
learned men, seven hours every day,
And that would be the sweetest thing of all!*

Replace the Jewish references with Armenian ones, and you have some idea of what my grandfather valued. He was, naturally the moderator of the discussion.

His two interlocutors were Fr. Diran Papazian, known to the community as “Der Diran” and to us as “Uncle Der Hayr;” and Der Diran’s brother-in-law, Prof. Dennis Papazian, known to us as “Uncle Dennis.” (Uncle Dennis’ sister, Rosalie, was married to Der Diran; though her maiden name was also Papazian, the families were not related). Dennis and Rosalie’s older sister,
continued on next page



COMMENTARY

MY TURN



by Harut Sassounian

US State Dept. Publishes Critical Report on Human Rights in Armenia

Several newspapers announced earlier this month that a major complaint has been submitted to the International Criminal Court (ICC) against Turkey. A group of European legal experts compiled a massive file which included “witness testimonies giving details of torture, state sponsored kidnapping, and wrongful imprisonment” by the Turkish government of its 200,000 opponents.

Both the European Court of Human Rights and the United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention had concluded that a large portion of the imprisonments and detentions by Turkey were a violation of the European Convention on Human Rights. They are considered crimes against humanity. The new complaint was delivered to the ICC prosecutor Karim Khan on February 9, but made public on March 1, 2023.

The 4,000-page dossier was prepared by the Belgian law firm Van Steenbrugge Advocaten, the Belgium-based NGO Turkey Tribunal, and the European judges association Magistrats Européens pour la Démocratie et les Libertés (MEDEL).

“Turkish officials have committed crimes against humanity against hundreds of thousands of opponents of the Erdogan regime,” the submission said. “These crimes amount to a ‘widespread and systematic attack against a civilian population’, meeting the threshold for the ICC to launch proceedings against high-ranking officials of the Erdogan regime.”

Even though Turkey is not a signatory to the Rome Statute that had established the ICC, the Court has jurisdiction to pursue these crimes since the Turkish government has committed some of the crimes on the territory of 45 ICC member states: Afghanistan, Albania, Austria, Bangladesh, Belgium, Bosnia Herzegovina, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Canada, Chad, Congo, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Denmark, France, Gabon, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Guinea, Jordan, Kenya, Liberia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Mali, Mongolia, Netherlands, Niger, Nigeria, North Macedonia, Peru, Poland, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Senegal, Switzerland, Tajikistan, The Gambia, Tunisia, Uganda, United Kingdom, United Republic of Tanzania, Venezuela, and Zambia.

The complaint states that there were 17 cases of enforced disappearance in which victims were abducted from Kenya, Cambodia, Gabon, Albania, Bulgaria, Moldova, Mongolia and Switzerland and taken back to Turkey. These abductees were accused of being followers of Fethullah Gulen, a US-based Muslim preacher. Pres. Erdogan supported Gulen for many years until their relationship soured. Thousands of Gulen’s followers, including 9,100 police of-

ficers, were subsequently fired from their jobs and arrested.

Osman Karaca was seized on October 14, 2019, in Cambodia where he was a schoolteacher. “After being held incommunicado for four days, Karaca was handed over to Turkish authorities who flew him back to Turkey on a small government jet. He was convicted of leading an armed terrorist group in the 2016 coup attempt, despite the fact he had left Turkey for Cambodia in 2002,” the Guardian reported.

Karaca is one of many Turks abducted from overseas and charged for being a ‘terrorist.’ The legal claim filed against Turkey at the ICC contained statements on the torture of 800 abductees, describing “in detail how torture has been inflicted on a large and consistent scale.”

“This should be investigated,” said Johan Vande Lanotte, a former Belgian deputy prime minister and human rights law professor, who helped set up the Turkish Tribunal. He is leading the effort to persuade the ICC to open an investigation. “The universal basic principles of international law are being violated.... Important members of the (Turkish) government cannot deny they are responsible, because they proclaimed their responsibility proudly.”

The Turkey Tribunal stated that it documented “59 cases of extraterritorial and domestic Enforced Disappearance, relating to 109 persons. While the Turkish state has always denied involvement in domestic disappearances, authorities have consistently boasted about illegal abductions made overseas. Most recently, in July 2021, President Erdogan gave a press conference next to an image of a Turkish teacher proclaiming that he had been abducted from a foreign country. In an arrogant demonstration of impunity, the published image of the abducted person showed clear signs of torture, and he later underwent surgery to treat his broken arm.”

The Turkey Tribunal added: “Concerning the Imprisonments in Violation of Fundamental Rules of International Law, official Turkish statistics show that investigations into alleged membership of a ‘terrorist organization’ were launched against 2,217,000 persons in the period 2015-2021; 560,000 persons were put on trial and 374,000 persons were convicted, 270,000 of whom were found to be members of a terrorist organization.”

Furthermore, according to the Turkey Tribunal, “Official Turkish statistics show that 129,410 public servants have been dismissed and 19,962 teachers had their teaching licenses cancelled, since 2016. In total, 234,419 passports were withdrawn in relation to arbitrary investigations against the alleged members of the Gülen movement. Of these, 155,000 relate to persons against whom no judicial action was launched, such as, for instance, the spouses of the persons against whom an investigation or persecution was launched.”

Former Belgian Deputy Prime Minister Vande Lanotte concluded: “We had the United Nations Working Group on Forced Disappearances look into this, the UN Human Rights Committee, the European Court of Human Rights, and even judges in Turkey itself, and nothing has been done, so this is the last possibility for justice.”

from previous page

Priscilla, though now living out of town, had been the best friend of my grandmother, Mary Kezelian.

Der Diran was a few years older than my grandfather, nobody really knew how old, since he was sent to the Jerusalem Seminary after being orphaned in Constantinople at a young age, where he was born during the years of the Allied Occupation just after the First World War. He had a heavy Armenian accent and was fluent in several languages. Like a mystic *vartabed* of old, Der Diran dispensed the church’s wisdom in clever aphorisms and did not shy away from jokes. Der Diran, like all Armenian theologians, believed that heaven was the mystical wedding feast of the Bridegroom, Christ, with his Bride, the Church; but in his case, he seemed to act every day as if he were already present at those festivities, and was a vivacious party goer as well as a spiritual sage.

The third member of this group was Uncle Dennis. In his “professor’s uniform” of a brown sport jacket (I don’t remember if it had elbow patches) and a sweater vest over his shirt and tie, he had glasses as thick as my grandfather’s and a face even more round. He was rotund like my grandfather but shared Der Diran’s dark complexion, and his hair, though thinning and almost bald on top, was still brown; he also had a closely trimmed, though wide, mustache. He was a History Professor and this entitled him to great deference and respect in academic matters, besides, he was an expert on the Soviet Union and with Armenia’s recent independence from the USSR, his knowledge was more in need than ever. He was about ten years younger than the other two men.

Occasionally, one of the Jewish relatives or family friends (my dad’s cousin was mar-

ried to a Jewish gentleman), would sit in on this discussion and contribute a valued Old Testament perspective. But the only child, in fact the only other person, who was drawn to this summit meeting of Armenian Patriarchs was myself, Harry A. Kezelian III, age 9.

What did they discuss? Everything from politics, to history, to theology; the Armenian Church, Armenian history, the Genocide, and the newly independent Republic of Armenia; world history, international politics and current events; Armenian community affairs and “church politics,” and always, how we as the Armenian people could survive and thrive given our understanding of all this.

As a 9-year-old, I wanted to enter their world and to be a part of it. This set my life on a trajectory where I was always interested in learning and academic pursuits; a romanticized childhood dream of becoming an archaeologist gave way to pursuing a major in history; practicality led me to law school; pursuit of something more fitting to my personality led me to St. Nersess Seminary, a career teaching high school history, and most recently to writing for the *Mirror-Spectator*.

As a kid, I didn’t think much about Uncle Dennis’ specific accomplishments, like his role in establishing the Armenian Assembly, his fighting for Genocide recognition, expanding the field of Armenian studies, and his career as a scholar of Russia and the Soviet Union which included a life changing trip to the USSR in the early 1960s (culminating in his miraculous survival of a plane crash in Uzbekistan). All these stories are contained in his recently published book of memoirs; some of them I learned for the first time from reading the book.

Despite the fact that I had known the

man my entire life, I think I saw him from a different perspective than any of his colleagues, close friends, or even family members. To me he was a foundational figure in the world I inhabited as a child; and while I did not really know the details of his academic career and expertise, his very existence as an “Armenian Professor” was a given, a cornerstone of my understanding of the community in which I was raised. Did I have a question about Armenian History? “Go ask Uncle Dennis,” I would be told.

Although he and his family departed Michigan for the East Coast when I was 19, I think we shared a special bond that I did not even have with my grandfather or Der Diran, as close as I was to both of them. It’s not that I was closer to Uncle Dennis, but that in me he recognized a kindred soul, and I understood and appreciated that recognition. Both he and I had the kind of brain that put education and learning as one of the highest values, aside from morality. While I didn’t pursue an academic career as he did, he never faulted me for that; while he knew I had the intelligence and interest, the world had changed a lot since he got his start in the early 1960s.

When I applied to college, he helped me write my admissions essay. I recall arriving at his house, and him greeting me with “Parev, inch bes es?” and kissing me on both cheeks in old country fashion. I didn’t know any other grown man who was born in America who did this. Yet, it was entirely natural for someone like Uncle Dennis. It was simply a normal part of Old World culture. In everything he did, Uncle Dennis made traditional Armenian culture “normal” in the US by simply acting like an Armenian without explanation and without apology.

When I asked him for a summer job during college, he hired me to work at the

Armenian Research Center, even though he was packing up and leaving town that summer to move to New Jersey where his wife, Dr. Mary Papazian, had gotten a new job. When I visited Armenia later that summer, he asked me to get in contact with Professor Levon Chookasezian, “if I had time,” and bring back some books for the Center. I did not complete my mission, but Uncle Dennis did not fault me for that. He knew that I had the intellectual capability and interest to appreciate and understand the things he cared about. Whether I did them or not was obviously due to some other factor, probably unknown to him and probably irrelevant. Regardless of what I did or did not accomplish, he had faith in my intelligence and that gave me faith in myself. It was a kind of faith that I hadn’t really seen other than from my parents, close family, and perhaps some of my very best teachers and clergy mentors.

From reading his memoirs, I realized that Uncle Dennis made his career during a time, the second half of the twentieth century, when the Armenian-American community was firmly establishing itself as a known presence in the US. Part of this process included the development of a way of doing things that was endemic to the Armenian community in the Diaspora in general and in North America in particular. In the establishment of this new ethos, which was a largely successful attempt to keep the best of the old and combine it with the best of the new, while discarding systems and thought processes that were either outdated or simply did not work in the United States, Uncle Dennis was one of the primary actors.

When I was in undergrad at the University of Michigan, I researched and wrote a thesis on the life of Archbishop Tiran Nersoyan, another of the primary actors in the see PAPIAZIAN, page 20



Young Aurora Winners Named

YEREVAN — The Young Aurora award was given this week to the Combili project developed by the UWC Dilijan team. The three finalist projects from UWC Dilijan, UWC South East Asia and UWC East Africa all chose to focus on finding innovative and creative ways to address sustainability issues within their local school environments, but the UWC Dilijan team has particularly impressed the judges.

Launched in 2017 by the Aurora Humanitarian Initiative in partnership with UWC International, Teach for All, and the African Leadership Academy, Young Aurora is designed to inspire young changemakers to address humanitarian concerns within their local school communities. As UWC Dilijan Co-Founder Veronika Zonabend explained, “It’s a pleasure and an honor to encourage and empower young people to believe that they are the architects of their own life and the future where we’re all going to live in. Big things and big changes start with small changes, which all of us make in our own communities,” she said.

Hosted online and moderated by UWC International’s Executive Director Faith

Abiodun, it was clear how much hard work and dedication the three finalists had put into their project presentations.

The winning UWC Dilijan team will receive \$4,000 in prize money to help further develop their project.

Recognizing that local communities in Yerevan (and cities worldwide) lack effective and sustainable systems for bio waste disposal, the Combili project creates small urban garden models run by local children. The gardens turn biowaste, which contributes to toxic gas emissions, into fertile soil using modern composters. The project combines three core areas: education — led by children who participate in workshops about gardening and composting; recreational — providing a community space for local people to enjoy; and a modern method of composting, with tumblers taking 30-60 days to produce fertile soil.

Now in its sixth year, Young Aurora continues to provide an important platform for young leaders to develop and grow their ideas into workable solutions addressing some of the world’s most pressing needs. And it was wonderful to see an opening

video reflecting on the scale of impact Young Aurora has had to date not just on the lives of those directly involved, but also on the communities the projects have served.

Ten schools from across the UWC movement and African Leadership Academy presented projects to a pre-selection panel.

The judging panel included: Anna Afeyan, Co-Founder, Noubar & Anna Afeyan Foundation; Diego Angemi, Chief of Social Policy, UNICEF; Prince Bashangezi, Waterford Kamhlaba UWCSEA Alumnus; Mirza Dinayi, 2019 Aurora Prize Laureate; Co-Founder, Air Bridge Iraq; Ernesto Zedillo, Director, Center for the Study of Globalization at Yale.

According to the winning team, the project was a true labor of love, and one that they hope will keep creating a valuable impact for many generations to come: “This project can be replicated anywhere. It’s a model that brings three key elements together: education, the tumblers, and the community garden. When these all three elements are put together, we can make a real change tackling this problem, because you can put these composters and tumblers everywhere, but no one will use them unless they are educated. That’s why it’s so important to educate people first.”

Remembering Dennis Papazian

PAPAZIAN, from page 19

process of community formation in the US. Serving as Primate of the Eastern Diocese from 1945-1954, Nersoyan presided over a time of change and adjustment, shepherding the Armenian Church from an institution that primarily served immigrants into one that recognized the growing percentage of American-born Armenians in its constituency. The founding of the Armenian Church Youth Organization of America (ACYOA) in 1946, marked one of the primary achievements of the Nersoyan administration, corralling the American-born Armenian youth into the Church and community life in the post-WWII era. I knew that Uncle Dennis had been active in the ACYOA in his early years, but I learned from his book how close he had been to Nersoyan, whom he viewed as a mentor. It didn’t surprise me in the least. When I did my research on Nersoyan, it struck me that the entire mentality of the Armenian-American community, at least that segment of it that I grew up in, was profoundly influenced by his view of the world, the church, and the Armenian people.

Therefore, it was no surprise that what Nersoyan did in regard to the church, his protégé, Dennis Papazian, helped to do in regard to Diasporan politics. The founding of the Armenian Assembly, which initially brought together all major Diasporan political and religious groups, heralded a new approach to Diasporan political lobbying, which was now based on the mentality of the American-born generations of Armenians. That this fact was pointed out to me as a positive development by Prof. Jirair Libaridian, who could not have been more different than Dennis Papazian in his temperament and his attitude toward the church, underscored the value of that contribution. Unfortunately, that unity was short-lived, a fact which Uncle Dennis lamented in my last interview with him. But just like the work of Nersoyan, Dennis Papazian’s work helped to create the Armenian community which I took for granted as a young person.

I regret that I did not find the time to read his book from cover to cover, and speak to him about it. After our last interview, he exhorted me to read it so that we could speak again and discuss the book. There was no particular reason for us to have a second Zoom session, especially considering the time difference to California and the state of his health. He simply wanted to. Obviously, he valued my opinion and he still wanted to take an opportunity to share his knowledge with me, to teach me.

I’m not sure if he realized it, but he had been teaching me the whole time. Uncle Dennis’ entire life was a lesson to me — a lesson in how to be an Armenian, how to be an American, how to be both at once, how to be an educated person, how to be a scholar, how to be a professional, and how to serve the church and the community. Though not a blood relative, I like to think I inherited some part of his spirit, and I will certainly carry that on in everything I do as an Armenian-American and as a human being in the world.

