

Yerevan Political Scientist Suren Sargsyan Lectures on Armenian Foreign Policy in Watertown

WATERTOWN — Yerevan political scientist Suren Sargsyan will present a lecture on the current geopolitical challenges facing Armenia, at the Baikar Building in Watertown, on Friday, May 19, at 7:30 p.m. The program is sponsored by the Tekeyan Cultural Association Boston Chapter and the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator*, for which he writes a regular column.

In his talk, he will address the current foreign policy of Armenia, the Nagorno-Karabakh problem, Armenian-Turkish relations, as well as Armenian-American relations and US foreign policy towards Armenia. He will separately address the tense situation in the South Caucasus, Russian policy in the region, the Iranian factor, as well as Armenia's opportunities in these difficult times.

Sargsyan is a political scientist, author, and PhD candidate in American studies, concentrating on US foreign policy towards Armenia, Azerbaijan, Turkey and the Soviet Union/Russia. At the same time, he is a Donald Rumsfeld Fellow and the President of the Armenian Center for American Studies, a research center based in Yerevan, Armenia.

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Balakian's Siamanto Program at NAASR Focuses on Importance Of Humanities in Medicine

By Alin K. Gregorian
Mirror-Spectator Staff

BELMONT, Mass. — On April 27, poetry, medicine and the Armenian Genocide

converged at a program at the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR) featuring Peter Balakian speaking about his classic translations



Dr. Peter Balakian at NAASR

of the devastating poems by Siamanto.

Bloody News from My Friend: Poems by Siamanto, translated by Balakian and Nevart Yaghlian, was published by Wayne State University

Press in 1996. The book contains works by one of the most famous modern Armenian poets who with his words captured the horrors of the Adana Massacres of 1909 before he himself was rounded up and executed by the Ottoman forces in 1915.

The poems he wrote about the Adana events were a reaction to the letters he had received from his friend, Balakian's grandfather, Dr. Diran Balakian, who had been a witness to the calamity.

The stunned Diran Balakian had poured his heart out in letters to his friend, Adom Yarjanian, whose penname was Siamanto, about the gruesome sights he had seen.

"In Adana, my grandfather wrote back a group of letters to his family and his friend, Siamanto," he recalled. "Siamanto was obsessed and riveted by them. He used

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A protest May 9 in Stepanakert (photo via Prime Minister's Office)

Pashinyan and Aliyev Make 'Clear Progress' in Brussels Talks

By Ismi Aghayev and Ani Avetisyan

Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev, President of the European Union Charles Michel, and Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan in Brussels on Sunday, March 14.

Armenia's Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev met in Brussels on Sunday where they discussed border delimitation, reopening transport and economic links, and the release of two Azerbaijani soldiers captured in Armenia.

The meeting was mediated by European Union Council President Charles Michel, who held one-on-one meetings with both leaders prior to their discussion.

Michel stated after the event that the conversation was "frank, open, and result-oriented."

The meeting came not long after four days of negotiations between the two countries' foreign ministers in Washington. Michel described those talks as 'positive', and underscored the importance of maintaining momentum and taking 'decisive steps' towards the signing of a comprehensive peace agreement.

Last week also saw exchange of fire between Armenia and Azerbaijan, injuring five people and killing one.

The discussion reportedly addressed questions of border delimitation, with the two countries' leaders agreeing to resume bilateral meetings to address the issue, and confirming

their commitment to the borders established in the 1991 Almaty Declaration.

Michel added that 'clear progress' had been made regarding reopening transport and economic links between the two countries, and that the two sides were now approaching agreement regarding reopening a railway connection to and via Nakhichevan.

The leaders reportedly also discussed the release of prisoners in coming weeks, particularly the two Azerbaijani soldiers captured in Armenian territory in April and 'stepping up' work on demining in the region.

Michel added that he had encouraged Azerbaijan to work towards guaranteeing Nagorno-Karabakh

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Karabakh Leaders Slam EU

STEPANAKERT (Azatutyun) — Nagorno-Karabakh's leadership accused the European Union late on Monday, May 15, of turning a blind eye to Azerbaijan's blockade of the Lachin corridor when it reacted to European Council President Charles Michel's remarks made after the latest Armenian-Azerbaijani summit in Brussels.

Michel, who hosted the talks between Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev, made no mention of the five-month blockade that has caused serious shortages of food and medicine as well as an energy crisis in Karabakh.

Instead, he urged Baku to embark on a dialogue with "Armenians living in the former Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast" for the purpose of "guaranteeing the rights

and security of this population."

"This fact shows that the president of the European Council not only does not hinder but actually encourages Azerbaijan to use the sufferings of the people of Artsakh as a political tool," the Karabakh Foreign Ministry charged in a statement.

It said Michel's remarks also demonstrate that "the EU leadership continues to ignore the legal rights and interests of the people of Artsakh and is guided only by its own geopolitical and short-term interests in the region to the detriment of the values of democracy and human rights proclaimed by the EU."

The statement added that only international recognition of the Karabakh Armenians' right to self-determination can be "the

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PARIS

First Woman from Armenia Receives Cartier Women's Initiative Award



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DALLAS

121st Diocesan Assembly Takes Place in Dallas



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YEREVAN

Monument Dedicated to Armenian-Polish Friendship Unveiled



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ARMENIA

NEWS from ARMENIA

Russia Has Not Delivered Arms Bought by Armenia

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — Armaments bought from Russia haven't been delivered to Armenia, the Deputy Foreign Minister Mnatsakan Safaryan said on May 16.

Speaking at a press conference, Safaryan was asked to comment on Secretary of the Security Council Armen Grigoryan's recent statement that Armenia has ordered and paid for Russian armaments but Russia is not delivering them.

"Indeed, the armaments didn't reach Armenia, and the work in this direction continues. I don't have anything else to add regarding this statement," Safaryan said.

Armenia PM Fears Western Sanctions over Russia Ties

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan expressed concern that the West could impose sanctions against Armenia for cooperating with Russia, in an interview with the Czech edition of Respekt on May 16.

The PM called the sanctions a "red line" for Armenia. He also stressed that Yerevan is "meeting Moscow halfway where possible."

According to him, he has made it clear to the Russian leadership that Armenia should not be sanctioned.

In addition, he noted that Yerevan is trying to be as transparent as possible regarding sanctioned goods.

Earlier, the official representative of the Russian Foreign Ministry, Maria Zakharova, claimed that the Russian presence in Armenia does not threaten Yerevan in any way.

Azerbaijani Soldiers Shot at Karabakh Civilians 3 Times In Past Month

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — The Azerbaijani military has targeted Nagorno Karabakh villagers three times in the past month, the Karabakh Prosecutor's office reports.

On April 18, the armed forces of Azerbaijan shot 5 times from an unknown firearm with the intention of killing Arman Gharamyan, a tractor operator, near the village of Aknaghbyur in Askeran region, but they were unable to kill the civilian because he hid from them.

On April 28, the Azerbaijanis opened fire on a group of residents — Artur Bagharyan, Anush Gharkhanyan, Harut Gharkhanyan, Tamara Mirzoyan, and Sarnaghbyur, who were carrying out agricultural work in the pomegranate orchard of the Nakhijevanik settlement of Askeran region. They also targeted Seryozha Abovyan, Gayane Abovyan, Sofik Papikyan, as well as Artur Ramazyan, but could not kill them either.

On May 5, in the administrative area of Vardadzor, Askeran region, the armed forces of Azerbaijan shot 4 times from an unidentified firearm in the direction of Aragats Vahanyan, a tractor worker, with the intention of killing him, but the man hid instead.

Pashinyan Under Opposition Fire After Fresh Talks With Aliyev

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan took another step towards restoring Azerbaijan's control over Nagorno-Karabakh during his weekend talks with Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev, the Armenian opposition claimed on Monday, March 15.

The four-hour talks hosted by European Union head Charles Michel in Brussels focused on an Armenian-Azerbaijani peace treaty sought by Baku.

"The leaders confirmed their unequivocal commitment to the 1991 Alma-Ata Declaration and respective territorial integrity of Armenia (29,800 square kilometers) and Azerbaijan (89,600 square kilometers)," Michel said after the meeting.

Azerbaijan's total Soviet-era area cited by Michel includes Karabakh. This is a further indication that Pashinyan's administration is ready to recognize Azerbaijani sovereignty over the Armenian-populated territory.

Not surprisingly, Baku seemed satisfied with the outcome of the latest Armenian-Azerbaijani summit. The Azerbaijani Foreign Ministry emphasized "Armenia's acceptance of Azerbaijan's internationally recognized territorial integrity."

Tigran Abrahamyan, a senior Armenian lawmaker representing the opposition Pa-

tiv Unem alliance, said this is consistent with Pashinyan's statements on the Karabakh conflict made over the past year.

Pashinyan stopped invoking the Karabakh Armenians' right to self-determination a year ago. Since then, he has spoken instead of the need to protect their "rights and security."

Abrahamyan described his rhetoric as a smokescreen for "surrendering Artsakh to Azerbaijan as smoothly as possible." The Brussels meeting only highlighted this policy, he said.

The Armenian Revolutionary Federation (Dashnaksutyun), a key member of the main opposition Hayastan bloc, expressed serious concern over Michel's statement. In a statement, the party's leadership accused Pashinyan of helping Baku regain full control over Karabakh and forcing its residents to flee their homeland.

The statement argued that Armenia had signed the 1991 declaration cited by the EU chief with reservations relating to Karabakh. It also pointed to a 1992 parliamentary act that bans Armenia's governments from signing any document that would recognize Azerbaijani sovereignty over Karabakh.

Any Armenian-Azerbaijani agreement running counter to that decision would

therefore be "null and void," warned Dashnaksutyun.

"It is obvious that we are entering the final phase of surrendering Artsakh," claimed Vartan Oskanian, who served as Armenia's foreign minister from 1998-2008.

"If Pashinyan's hand is to be grabbed so that he does not sign such a document, then now is the time to do that. Otherwise it will be too late," he wrote.

Andranik Kocharyan, the pro-government chairman of the Armenian parliament committee on defense and security, downplayed Michel's remarks on the Aliyev-Pashinyan meeting.

"Armenia always recognized Azerbaijan's territorial integrity... but Artsakh has its own territory and status," Kocharyan told reporters.

"Today Artsakh is probably the most independent state in the world; [it will remain so] for the next three or four years," he claimed. "We'll see what happens after that."

In recent months Pashinyan has publicly encouraged Karabakh's leaders to negotiate with Azerbaijan while accusing Baku of planning to commit "genocide" in the region. The authorities in Stepanakert have repeatedly denounced his public pronouncements on the conflict.

Yerevan Still Reluctant to Clarify Stance on Karabakh's Status

By Astghik Bedevian

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — Two days after the leaders of Armenia and Azerbaijan reportedly made progress during talks in Brussels, the Armenian government again declined to clarify on Tuesday, May 16 whether it recognizes Azerbaijani sovereignty over Nagorno-Karabakh.

Charles Michel, the European Union chief who hosted the talks, said Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev "confirmed their unequivocal commitment to ... respective territorial integrity of Armenia (29,800 square kilometers) and Azerbaijan (86,600 square kilometers)."

The total Soviet-era area of Azerbaijan cited by Michel includes Karabakh.

"Negotiations are ongoing on the provision of international guarantees for ensuring Nagorno-Karabakh's rights and security," Deputy Foreign Minister Mnatsakan Safaryan repeatedly told reporters as they pressed him on the implications of Mi-

chel's statement.

Safaryan said Armenia always recognized Azerbaijan's territorial integrity. "So there is nothing new here," he said.

The diplomat did not clarify whether Yerevan will explicitly recognize Karabakh as a part of Azerbaijan in a peace treaty currently discussed by the conflicting sides.

The Armenian and Azerbaijani foreign ministers are scheduled to meet in Moscow later this week for further talks on the treaty.

Meanwhile, Armenian opposition leaders continued to portray Michel's remarks as further proof of Pashinyan's readiness to help Baku regain control over Karabakh.

"86,600 square kilometers means Karabakh is a part of Azerbaijan," said Armen-

Rustamyan of the opposition Hayastan alliance.

Pashinyan has not yet made any public statements on the Brussels summit held on Sunday, March 14. In recent months, he has publicly encouraged Karabakh's leaders to negotiate with Azerbaijan while accusing Baku of planning to commit "genocide" in the Armenian-populated region.

The authorities in Stepanakert have repeatedly denounced Pashinyan's comments on the conflict with Azerbaijan. In a joint statement issued on April 19, the five political groups represented in the Karabakh parliament again accused him of undermining the Karabakh Armenians' right to self-determination which was supported by international mediators for decades.

Avinyan's Lawyer Asks Court to Unfreeze Reporter David Sargsyan's Assets

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) — Yerevan Deputy Mayor Tigran Avinyan's lawyer Harutyun Harutyunyan asked a court in the Armenian capital to unfreeze assets of 168 Zham reporter David Sargsyan, on May 16.

Avinyan filed a defamation lawsuit against Sargsyan and his newspaper after the journalist released a video report accusing the vice mayor of illicit enrichment. The report claimed Avinyan and his family had been "steadily getting richer" since Nikol Pashinyan came to power in 2018.

Earlier, the court had granted Avinyan's request to freeze the assets of both the newspaper and the journalist worth 18 million drams and 9 million drams, respectively, pending a verdict in the case.

In a statement on Tuesday, May 16, Harutyunyan said following discussions with his client, he filed a motion to the court to unfreeze the reporter's assets in response to a statement issued by Armenian media organizations on May 12.

"It also highlights that Tigran Avinyan

has no intention of bankrupting any media outlet or deliberately causing it any financial inconvenience," the lawyer said.

At the same time, he urged media outlets and reporters to be "as scrupulous as possible" and remain committed to the principle of integrity.

Earlier in the week, Sargsyan, a journalist for 168 Zham, an opposition newspaper, produced a [video](#) report claiming that Avinyan and his family had become richer since Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan assumed office following the 2018 revolution.

Avinyan, a close ally of Pashinyan's and the ruling Civil Contract party's candidate in the upcoming mayoral elections in Yerevan this autumn, filed a lawsuit against 168 Zham seeking 'substantial compensation'. He argued their 'defamatory' report harmed his reputation.

Avinyan had defended his legal action, stating that media outlets should consider the consequences of "lies and defamation." (OCMedia contributed to this report.)

Karabakh Leaders Slam EU

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basis for a sustainable settlement of the conflict."

The Armenian government stopped championing that right a year ago. Pashinyan subsequently declared that it recognizes Azerbaijan's territorial integrity.

Michel implied after Sunday's summit that Yerevan is now also ready to recognize Azerbaijani sovereignty over Karabakh. The Armenian opposition expressed serious concern over this declaration, renewing its allegations that Pashinyan is forcing the Karabakh Armenians to live under Azerbaijani rule.

By contrast, the strongly-worded Karabakh statement contained no criticism of Pashinyan.

3,000-Year-Old Bakery Found with Sacks of Preserved Flour

YEREVAN (*Miami Herald/ancient-origins.net*) — Archaeologists have uncovered a 3,000-year-old bakery in Metsamor, Armenia, astonishingly, still housing several sacks worth of flour embedded in the soil. The discovery was made within the remnants of a large structure, housing multiple ovens, which had succumbed to a fire.

“The flour has been preserved in the form of bright spots. At first glance, it looked like light burned ash. Thanks to flotation (rinsing) we proved that it is flour, not ash,” reported the head of research, Professor Krzysztof Jakubiak from the Faculty of Archaeology of the University of Warsaw.

The flour had formed a layer several dozen centimeters thick. It is estimated that up to 3.5 tons of flour was originally stored in the building. Unfortunately, only a few sacks worth of organic material has survived over the centuries. It was primarily wheat flour that was used, and quantities point to large-scale production and a certain culture of bread making within the region, both at a micro and macro level.

Similar discoveries of flour have been made in the wider Armenian region, such as the fortress settlement of Tejszebaini (currently known as Karmir Blur), which belonged to the ancient Urartu kingdom. The Caucasus region has a history of using flour for divination purposes, which could potentially alter the interpretation of the building’s function, but this remains to be examined further.

The palatial-sized structure was in use from the end of the 11th century BC right up until the beginning of the 9th century BC, functioning initially as a public building. Later on, with furnaces being added, the building took on an economic role — a communal space where people used wheat flour to bake bread. Eventually, a fire led to the collapse of the structure. Perhaps there were several other transitional periods in the middle, but this is unclear as of now.

All in all, the building consisted of two rows of 18 wooden columns which supported a reed roof with a wooden entablature. The wooden elements have not survived the ravages of time, but the stone column bases and well-preserved burnt fragments of beams and roof plating have, giving a glimpse into the original construction.

“It is therefore one of the oldest known constructions of this type from the areas of the South Caucasus and eastern Anatolia. Its remains have survived so well only thanks to the ancient fire that brought an end to this object,” added Professor Jakubiak.

Metsamor: Ancient Defensive Settlement and Site

The Polish-Armenian archaeological team uncovered the flour-filled structure within Metsamor, an internationally renowned archaeological site



An overview of the bakery



Metsamor archaeological site, Armenia. (CC by SA)

located a few dozen kilometers west of Yerevan. This site dates back to the 4th millennium BC and was initially established as a defensive settlement. The city was continuously inhabited from the 4th millennium B.C. until the 17th century. In the Araks Valley, it remained an important cultural and political center until the 17th century.

During its existence, Metsamor covered an area of approximately 10 hectares. The city was dominated by a fortified fortress, surrounded by temple complexes with seven sanctuaries, while the flour-filled building was situated in the lower city, outside the primary fortification network.

The identity of the settlement’s inhabitants during that period remains uncertain,

as there are no written records available. However, it is believed that Metsamor was part of a proto-state tribal group. In the 8th century BC, Metsamor became a part of the Urartu Kingdom, also known as the biblical kingdom of Ararat, following its conquest by King Argishti I.

The research project at Metsamor was a joint effort involving the Faculty of Archaeology at the University of Warsaw, the Center for Mediterranean Archaeology at the University of Warsaw, and the Department of Antiquity and Protection of National Heritage of Armenia. It has been led by Professor Ashot Piliposjan from the Armenian side, according to a press release by Science in Poland (PAP).

First Woman from Armenia Receives Cartier Women’s Initiative Award

PARIS — Mariam Torosyan, founder and CEO of Safe YOU, has been named one of the top three impact-driven entrepreneurs in Europe by the Cartier Women’s Initiative’s Regional Award. The award recognizes and funds talented impact entrepreneurs who are leveraging business as a force for good.

Mariam Torosyan was selected for her dedication to combating Gender-Based Violence (GBV) through innovation by using AI technologies for prevention, as well as for providing additional tools for prosecution and creating systemic change.

For the first time in its 16-year history, the Cartier Women’s Initiative has chosen as a finalist a woman entrepreneur from Armenia. This is a significant milestone for Safe YOU, which was founded by Mariam Torosyan in 2020 to combat GBV and promote gender equality. The initiative aims to empower women by providing them with free safety tools and resources to seek help

in dangerous situations, as well as remote legal and psycho-social support. The project also works to raise awareness about domestic violence and promote gender equality in Armenia.

The Cartier Women’s Initiative is committed to supporting women who are leading businesses that create positive social and environmental impact. Its main vision is to ensure every woman entrepreneur driving social and environmental change can reach their full potential. The program focuses on businesses in a variety of sectors, including healthcare, education, environment, technology, and social entrepreneurship. Over the years, the program has supported a diverse range of businesses from all over the world.

“It is a great honor to be selected as one of the CWI 33 new fellows this year and join a global community of nearly 300 influential impact entrepreneurs who are impacting and changing the world every day!”

said Mariam Torosyan. “Being in the top 3 is a recognition of the hard work and dedication of our Safe YOU team and the impact that our initiative is having on the lives of women in Armenia and beyond.”

The winners of the Cartier Women’s Initiative Regional Awards were announced at an award ceremony held on May 10 in Paris. This year’s awards ceremony was filled with incredible philanthropists, activists and forces for change including award-winning artist and environmental activist Mélanie Laurent, award-winning actor, director and activist, Nadine Labaki, and award-winning actor and producer Yara Shahidi.

Presenting the final awards on stage were the distinguished Amal Clooney, renowned human rights lawyer, Renaud Lestringent, Director of Cartier France and Cyrille Vigneron, President and CEO of Cartier International. Mariam Torosyan placed second in Europe.



Mariam Torosyan, left, with Amal Clooney

INTERNATIONAL

INTERNATIONAL

UK Ambassador Attends Wine Fair

LONDON (Public Radio of Armenia) — Armenia's Ambassador to UK Varuzhan Nersesyan on May 16 visited the Armenia stall at the London Wine Fair, taking place at the Olympia May 15-17.

Showcased at the stall were the products of 12 wine producers, which exhibit numerous Armenian wines made from indigenous grape varieties located across the country.

Nersesyan attached importance of the Armenia stall in showcasing Armenia's rich wine-making traditions and underlined the value of presenting Armenian wines to British consumers and businesses alike.

Italy Seizes Cocaine Reportedly Headed to Armenia

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — Italian law enforcement agencies in the western town of Gioia Tauro in the Metropolitan City of Reggio Calabria have seized a record 2.7 tons of cocaine that was reportedly intended to be smuggled into Armenia, according to the Italian ANSA news agency.

The huge consignment of cocaine was smuggled into the Italian port from Ecuador in two containers loaded with 78 tons of bananas. According to the report, the cocaine with a street value of €800,000,000 was intended to be smuggled into Armenia through the Port of Batumi in Georgia.

The anti-mafia law enforcement agency of Reggio Calabria coordinated and executed the drug bust.

US Admits Azerbaijan Destroys Karabakh Monuments

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — The US State Department has released the International Religious Freedom Report 2022 of the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom. Azerbaijan was included in the list of countries under special control.

According to the report, the state of religious freedom in Azerbaijan eroded in 2022.

The report mentions the destruction of Armenian spiritual heritage by Azerbaijan in the territories of Nagorno-Karabakh that passed under the control of Baku.

"International structures and other organizations continue to question the willingness of the government of Azerbaijan to protect and preserve the religious and cultural heritage in Nagorno-Karabakh and surrounding territories under Azerbaijani control. In February, the former Minister of Culture Anar Karimov announced the creation of a working group, the purpose of which was to remove Armenian Apostolic inscriptions from churches, which he called "unreal". With most probability, the government abandoned the plan after the international community's outrage, and in March the European Parliament condemned Azerbaijan's continuous policy of erasing and denying the Armenian cultural heritage in and around Nagorno-Karabakh," the document says.

'Starmus Earth' Launched Simultaneously In London and Bratislava

LONDON/BRATISLAVA — Starmus, the global festival of science communication — the brainchild of astrophysicist Garik Israelian, PhD and Queen guitarist Sir Brian May, who also has a PhD in astrophysics — has announced it will turn its gaze from the stars to the future of planet Earth taking its seventh edition to Bratislava in 2024.

On May 11, May and Israelian announced the festival's theme, "Starmus Earth: The Future of Our Home Planet," at a panel event at London's Royal Society. They were joined by world-renowned ethologist and conservationist Dr. Jane



Dr. Brian May

Goodall DBE, (who now joins the Starmus Advisory Board), cosmologist Sir Martin Rees and Global Governance Professor Mary Kaldor, who led a unique discussion, moderated by Dr. Israelian, on how to solve some of our planet's most pressing challenges.

Microbiologist and Nobel Laureate Emmanuelle Charpentier joined the panel remotely from a parallel launch event on the river Danube in Bratislava, alongside iPod inventor Tony Fadell and Richard Marko, a cybersecurity expert and CEO of ESET, the festival's lead partner.

"Starmus has traditionally focused on interrogating the mysteries of the universe, looking upwards to inspire and educate the next generation of explorers and regenerate the spirit of discovery, bringing art, music, and the world's greatest scientific and artistic

minds together to enhance science communication," said Starmus co-founder Israelian. "As the old saying goes, 'Earth is a planet too!' We are a privileged part of the cosmos, and as living beings we are made of star stuff. The very atoms in our bodies were forged in the earliest days of the universe or in the deaths of low-mass and high-mass stars. Earth is in the universe, and just as much a part of it as the stars".

"Climate change could eventually make life on Earth untenable, and we are see-

ing signs of that rapid evolution now. We must take steps to take care of our world, and Starmus offers an important voice that draws attention to the urgency" said Dr. Jane Goodall.

In 2024, Starmus will turn its gaze closer to home and analyse how we can tackle the challenges that most threaten Earth's future, from the threats facing our environment and climate to far-reaching technologies like artificial intelligence, genetic engineering, and cybersecurity — as well as the humanitarian crises caused by armed conflict around the world.

"Since 2011, STARMUS conferences have assembled scientists and artists to look outwards at the Space around us with clear eyes, to celebrate the wonders of the Universe. This year, more than ever aware of the current threat of the extinction of life in the Biosphere, for the first time, STARMUS focuses inward on our home planet. By bringing together many of the greatest and most free-thinking brains from all countries, we will try to find new answers to the questions we must now ask, to save the life of Planet Earth." said Sir Brian May, legendary Queen guitarist and Starmus co-founder and Advisory Board member.

This year, Starmus is partnering with ESET — a global cybersecurity company headquartered in Bratislava — to inspire young people in Slovakia and around the world to take responsibility and contribute to the future of our planet, using scientific research and state-of-the-art technology.

"ESET's role is to deliver state-of-the-art technology and innovation that protects societal progress. We believe this progress is brought about by science," said Richard Marko, CEO of ESET. "We are proud to partner with Starmus to join its efforts in inspiring new generations of scientists and those who appreciate its values."

Starmus Earth will welcome world-class scientists, artists, and environmentalists to share breakthrough discoveries, debate the big questions and inspire new generations of scientists, technologists, and activists. The Starmus Advisory Board will announce the full line-up of scientists, artists, and musicians later

this year, but some of the 40+ confirmed speakers at Starmus Earth include astronaut and Apollo 16 moonwalker Charlie Duke, former president of Ireland Mary Robinson, physicist Donna Strickland, and the legendary American science television presenter Bill Nye. (full list on www.starmus.com)

The festival, as in previous editions, will also award the Stephen Hawking Medal for Science Communication across four categories: Music & Arts, Science Writ-

ing, Films & Entertainment, and Lifetime Achievement.

In addition to launching its seventh edition, Starmus also released previously unseen live music performances from past iterations of the festival: "Who Wants to Live Forever?" from Starmus V, performed by Sir Brian May, Hans Zimmer, Vittorio Grigolo, Steve Vai and Rick Wakeman with the Luzern Symphony Orchestra; and "Smoke on the Water" from Starmus VI, featuring Sir Brian May, Jeff Scott Soto, Derek Sherinian, Simon Phillips, Ric Fierabracci and Ron "Bumblefoot" Thal.

Next year's festival will be the first Starmus since September 2022, when it was held in Yerevan, Armenia and celebrated 50 years of mankind's exploration of Mars. Previous incarnations of Starmus have seen the festival travel to Zurich, Switzerland; Trondheim, Norway; and Spain's Canary Islands.

Tickets for Starmus Earth, held in Bratislava from 12-17 May 2024, will go on sale in October. For more information visit Starmus.com

Created by Garik Israelian PhD, astrophysicist at the Institute of Astrophysics of the Canary Islands (IAC) and Sir Brian



Dr. Garik Israelian

May PhD, astrophysicist and the lead guitarist of the iconic rock band Queen, Starmus is a festival of science, art and music that has featured presentations from astronauts, cosmonauts, Nobel Prize winners and prominent figures from various scientific disciplines and musical backgrounds.

Stephen Hawking and Alexei Leonov, together with Brian May, worked to create the Stephen Hawking Medal for Science Communication in 2015, awarded to individuals and teams who have made significant contributions to science communication. Previous Stephen Hawking Medal winners include Dr. Jane Goodall, Elon Musk, Neil deGrasse Tyson, Brian Eno, Hans Zimmer, and the Apollo 11 documentary.

Pashinyan and Aliyev Make 'Clear Progress' in Brussels Talks

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Armenians' rights and security, and had raised the need for a 'transparent and constructive dialogue' between them and Baku.

Azerbaijan's Foreign Ministry described the meeting as 'useful and result-oriented', while noting that the Brussels meetings had not taken place for almost nine months due to 'attempts to interfere and set conditions'.

Armenia's Prime Minister's Office noted the same points of discussion described

by Michel, while offering no assessment of the meeting.

Both Yerevan and the EU Council President also said the leaders would meet again on the margins of the European Political Community Summit in Chisinau, Moldova, on June 1, this time alongside French President Emmanuel Macron and German Chancellor Olaf Scholz.

Baku has previously rejected France's involvement in the negotiations, accusing

the country of supporting Armenia.

Michel stated that the leaders had agreed to hold the Brussels meetings 'as often as necessary', with another meeting scheduled to take place in July, and that he would invite Pashinyan and Aliyev to meet at another European Political Community summit in Granada in October.

(This article originally appeared on the website OCMedia on May 14.)



INTERNATIONAL

Erdogan Proves Unbeatable As Turkey Heads for Runoff

By Amberin Zaman

ISTANBUL (AI-Monitor) — As Turkey heads for a runoff election in two weeks, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan proved once again that he and his Justice and Development Party (AKP) remain unbeatable, leaving the opposition in a state of shock and disarray and likely granting the country's strongman his dream of reigning over the republic in its 100th year.

Even the most respected pundits got it wrong, predicting in the final days before May 14's parliamentary and presidential elections that the main opposition's presidential candidate Kemal Kilicdaroglu would win, perhaps even in a first round. The opposition is now left taking credit for denying Erdogan a win in the first round after he failed to secure more than the 50% vote needed to win by a whisker. The Supreme Electoral Board's latest count shows him with 49.40% of ballots cast versus 44.96% for Kilicdaroglu.

Barring some last-minute twist, Erdogan is widely expected to embark on an unprecedented third decade in power.

Just how Erdogan managed to pull off another victory in the face of tremendous adversity will be scrutinized for years. The economy is in shambles, with runaway inflation leaving millions of Turks struggling to even afford onions. The massive earthquakes that decimated large swathes of southern Turkey have multiplied their misery. The president and his family, who live in a 1,100-room palace, are tainted by widespread allegations of corruption. Tens of thousands of dissidents are languishing in jail.

May 14 must have been particularly horrible for civil rights activist Osman Kavala and the country's most popular Kurdish politician, Selahattin Demirtas, who remain behind bars on bogus charges in flagrant violation of European Court of Human Rights rulings demanding their release. Erdogan has vowed to keep them in prison.

The election was technically free, if practically unfair. Erdogan has used the one-man-rule system imposed in the wake of a controversial referendum in 2018 to stack the system in his favor, castrating the media and stuffing the judiciary and other key institutions with yes-men. His vast propaganda machine has been pumping out lies about the opposition. In April, Erdogan got 32 hours of air time on state TV compared with 32 minutes for Kilicdaroglu. But none of this suffices to explain the latter's defeat.

Fears of wide-scale fraud have proved empty so far, though there are multiple complaints pending, and there was little if any violence at the polls where a record portion of voters — 88% — cast their ballots.

"These were competitive but still limited elections, as the criminalization of some political forces, including the detention of several opposition politicians, prevented full political pluralism and impeded individuals' rights to run in the elections," Michael Georg Link, special coordinator and leader of the European observer mission, said in a statement.

"In the end, identity politics trumped all else," Ozgur Unluhisarcikli, Turkey director of the German Marshall Fund of the United States, told AI-Monitor. "The identity projected by Erdogan and the AKP resonated far more than the vision for Turkey painted by Kilicdaroglu and the opposition," concurred Can Selcuki, an Istanbul-based consultant. That identity is Sunni, conservative and nationalist, overlaid by a thick coat of patriarchalism.

Fearmongering and polarization lay at the core of the AKP campaign. Throughout it Erdogan claimed Turkey's national security hinged on this election, citing Kilicdaroglu's informal alliance with the Kurdish-led YSP as proof of his links to the Kurdistan Workers Party.

Though Erdogan refrained from targeting Kilicdaroglu's Alevi faith, the message spread by AKP cadres in mosques across Turkey was that Sunni Islam's very survival was at stake. Kilicdaroglu's hope that the inclusion of three

religiously conservative parties in his Table of Six Alliance would allay such fearmongering proved to be wrong. The end result was that at least 30 candidates from those parties won seats in the parliament. Today, the CHP can no longer depend on their loyalty, as they could easily cut deals with the AKP. On the bright side, the CHP's own numbers in parliament rose 22 seats since the last election, going from 146 to 168.

It clearly did not hurt that Russian President Vladimir Putin gave his Turkish ally a boost, deferring natural gas payments and transferring several billion dollars to the Central Bank months ahead of the polls. Fellow autocrats in Saudi Arabia, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates followed suit.

Like many, Berk Esen, an assistant professor of political science at Sabanci University, believes the opposition faces a near impossible task in reversing its defeat. "It will be very hard," Esen said. The opposition alliance Kilicdaroglu so painstakingly built was already looking fragile when Meral Aksener, the leader of the nationalist Good Party, openly opposed his candidacy, predicting Erdogan would beat him.

Tens of thousands of displaced quake victims bused in by the opposition to their home provinces will likely balk at going back to vote in the second round, especially for a loser. The same goes for millions of absentee voters.

Pro-YSP Kurds may prove as unmotivated if not more, Esen contended. "It is going to be very hard to get Kurds to vote for Kilicdaroglu again," said Ramazan Tunc, an economist in Diyarbakir. There is widespread anger that many non-Kurdish voters who backed the Kurdish group in previous elections defected to the CHP, pushing its share of the vote down to 8% compared with 10% in the last elections in 2018, Tunc explained.

While some in the opposition entertain hopes of winning over Ogan's supporters, disaffected youths who oppose Erdogan and Kilicdaroglu alike, the more likely outcome is that they will stay at home in disgust.

Jordan, Palestinian Authority Cease Recognition of Armenian Patriarch of Jerusalem

JERUSALEM (Combined Sources) — The Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem expresses its deep concern about the decision of Jordan and Palestine to suspend their recognition of Patriarch Nourhan Manougian on May 11.

"The urgently convened Holy Synod meeting on May 12th, 2023 expresses its deep concern regarding the news circulated on May 11th through social media and the publication of various Jordanian and Palestinian news sources, in which both the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and Palestinian government have decided to freeze the Patriarchal recognition of the Armenian Patriarch of Jerusalem,"



Patriarch Nourhan Manougian

His Beatitude Archbishop Nourhan Manougian," it said in a statement posted on Facebook by Father Aghan Gogchian, chancellor of the Armenian Patriarchate on Friday, May 12.

"The most disconcerting aspect to this decision is its timing. Notably, becoming public just after the Holy Synod leveled the strictest punishment to the main person responsible for the 'Cows Garden' issue. That person being Khachig (formerly Archimandrite, Very Rev. Father Baret) Yeretsian in his previous position as the former Director of Real Estate Department. Per the directive of the Holy Synod, this individual has been defrocked of his priestly rites, banished, and is no longer living on the premises of the Patriarchate," the statement concluded.

The statement indicated that the decision of Jordan and Palestine came after the "deal" related to the Al-Bustan site known as the "Cows' Garden" and its surroundings, which extends to the "Al-Qishla" building in Bab Al-Khalil, which constitutes a large part of the Armenian neighborhood, as Patriarch Manougian was asked to stop any measures of this would affect the historical and legal status of these properties, which would change their demographic and geographical nature, but he did not respond to any of these demands.

The two sides affirmed that the Armenian Quarter is an integral part of the Old City as occupied territory, to which resolutions issued by the UN Security Council and the UN General Assembly apply.

According to the statement, the Executive Council of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has issued several decisions considering the Old City and its walls on the List of World Heritage in Danger, and that Manougian's dealings constituted a violation of relevant international covenants and decisions, which aim to preserve the status quo in Jerusalem and the protection of the authentic Jerusalemite Armenian heritage.

This is a developing story and will be followed up.

Javad Marandi: Tory Donor Named in UK Azerbaijani Laundromat Probe

LONDON (*Evening Standard*) — Conservative Party donor Javad Marandi was revealed today as a key figure linked to a major money laundering operation targeted by the National Crime Agency.

A court ruling said that bank records showed that Javad Marandi, who has been on a Conservative advisory board of ultra-wealthy supporters, either owned or was connected to companies involved in a "criminal enterprise" moving vast sums of illicit funds around the world.

The judgment states that he received \$49 million directly from the bank account of one of the companies used "to launder the proceeds of crime" as part of the scheme — known as the "Azerbaijani laundromat" — and that one of the companies owned by Marandi received a further \$107 million from the same account. It also shows that Marandi was a conduit for dirty money channeled to an oligarch's son in London.

Marandi, who is one of London's most successful tycoons and has a home on Belgrave's Eaton Square, has strongly denied any wrongdoing and had managed to keep his connection to the money laundering case secret through an anonymity order imposed



Javad Marandi

by a court in 2021.

He had claimed that revealing his name would inflict "catastrophic" damage on him and his businesses, which in this country also include the Emilia Wickstead fashion brand and the Wed2B wedding outfit retailer.

Marandi, 55, is also the landlord of the celebrity favored Soho Farmhouse in Oxfordshire and the long-term holder of the McDonald's fast-food franchise in Azerbaijan. His other overseas businesses include a five-star hotel in Brussels. He also has a charitable foundation that supports The Royal Foundation charity set up by the Prince and Princess of Wales and other organizations ranging from St. Paul's School to Centrepoint. He was also a managing partner in Pasha Construction, a vast real estate developer in Azerbaijan that belongs to the ruling Aliyev family.

The Azerbaijani Laundromat was a system of interconnected offshore companies that transmitted money using fraudulent transactions to disguise where it came from. For that reason, it is usually impossible to determine the origin of the billions of dollars that flowed through it. But after obtaining banking records from Estonia, journalists were able to piece together where some of the funds ended up. Among the beneficiaries were prominent members of Azerbaijan's ruling elite, including members and associates of the Aliyev family.

Community News

Fr. Ghazar Bedrossian Assumes Pastorship of Holy Cross Armenian Catholic Church of Belmont

By Aram Arkun

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

WATERTOWN — The greater Boston area community this year welcomed a new addition to the Armenian clergy in the region with the arrival of Fr. Ghazar Bedrossian as the new pastor of the Holy Cross Armenian Catholic Church of Belmont. An outgoing and energetic man still in his 30s, Fr. Bedrossian



Fr. Ghazar Bedrossian

appears ready and willing to plunge into community life.

He declared, “I have a mission in Boston: to serve the Armenian community, from the eldest one to the oldest one. As Saint Mother Theresa of Calcutta once said: ‘Not all of us can do great things. but we can do small things with great love’.”

Fr. Ghazar was born in Aleppo, Syria, in 1985. He attended the Armenian Catholic Sisters’ Zvartnots School, and after graduating from the Mekhitarist School of that city he went to Bzommar, Lebanon, in 2000 to continue his secondary education. He received his high school diploma in 2006.

He studied philosophy at the Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas (Angelicum) in Rome, following which he studied theology at see PRIEST, page 7



Fr. Ghazar Bedrossian, at left, with Nerses Bedros XIX Tarmouni, Catholicos-Patriarch of the Armenian Catholics of Cilicia, during the Holy Mass of the Armenian Genocide centenary in the Vatican on April 12, 2015. It was presided over by Pope Francis. At that time, Fr. Ghazar was the Secretary of the Patriarch.



Diocesan Primate Fr. Mesrop Parsamyan, presiding over the Eastern Diocese’s annual Assembly for the first time since his election as Primate last year. (Photo: Joan Stuckmann)

121st Diocesan Assembly Takes Place in Dallas

DALLAS — When the 121st Diocesan Assembly of the Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church of America began its opening session, it was the first time the body had met in a completely in-person manner in more than three years, since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The gathering marked several other firsts as well. It was the first Diocesan Assembly to be presided over by the Very Rev. Fr. Mesrop Parsamyan, who was elected as the 13th Primate of the Diocese one year ago.

More personally for Fr. Mesrop, the 2023 Assembly was his first Diocesan-scale event since recovering from an auto accident in the summer of 2022. “I cannot say enough how grateful I am to all of you, who have been so generous with your encouraging words and prayers,” Fr. Mesrop told the delegates in his welcoming remarks.

Under the Primate’s presidency, the 2023 Assembly convened on Thursday, May 4, and continued through adjournment on Saturday, May 6, 2023. In all, 132 parish representatives — clergy, parish council chairs, and Diocesan delegates — along with a substantial number of observers, gathered in person at the Dallas/Plano Marriott at Legacy Town Center, in Plano, TX, to join the proceedings.

St. Sarkis Armenian Church of Carrollton, TX, hosted the 121st Assembly, with admirable levels of organization and hospitality. To complement the business aspect of the meeting, the weekend’s social and liturgical events took place on the extensive campus of St. Sarkis Church, which was consecrated one year ago. Hosting a Diocesan Assembly in Dallas was additional “first” for the weekend, said parish pastor Fr. Ghevond Ajamian in opening remarks.

Assembly chair Gregory Saraydarian (Holy Martyrs Church, Bayside, NY) called the inaugural session to order on May 4. A formal message from Karekin II, the Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians, was read to the delegates, after which Parsamyan set the warm-hearted tone of the meeting with his welcoming words.

“If this assembly feels like a reunion, a homecoming,” he said, “that’s because it is those things. We’ve come back together with people we love, in the arms of the spiritual home we all cherish — the spiritual home of the entire Armenian people: our Holy, Apostolic Church.”

see ASSEMBLY, page 10



From left, Diocesan Assembly chairman Gregory Saraydarian, secretary Laurie Bejoian, Diocesan Primate Fr. Mesrop Parsamyan and Diocesan Legate Abp. Vicken Aykazian (Photo: Joan Stuckmann)

Dean Highlights AUA Advances At LA Program

GLENDALE — On April 27, the American University of Armenia (AUA) Office of Development hosted a talk on “AUA’s Direction Forward & Up” with Dr. Sharistan Melkonian, AUA’s dean of General Education and accreditation liaison officer.

The event took place at the Armenian Society of Los Angeles and was attended by AUA supporters and members of the community, as well as alumni who shared the significance of AUA in their education and personal growth. Melkonian spoke on a range of topics, including the rising enrollment numbers, existing and developing academic programs, meaningful partnerships with other institutions, and the expansion of campus facilities, all of which highlighted how AUA is addressing the growing demand in Armenia and the region.

Sharing data that demonstrate a 177-percent increase in student enrollment since 2013, the year AUA launched its undergraduate degree program, Dr. Melkonian covered key elements of the University’s success, including its need-blind admission policy which ensures that no Arme-



Dr. Sharistan Melkonian, left, with Baydsar Thomasian

nian citizen is denied access to an AUA education solely because of their financial inability to pay tuition. Acknowledging the AUA Development team’s efforts, she added that AUA is elevating its outreach efforts to ensure that “we really get the word out so that the best students in Armenia, regardless of whether they are from Yerevan or the regions, know that this is an opportunity for them.”

Touching on AUA’s existing academic programs and those in development, Dr. Melkonian elaborated on the new Bachelor of Science in Environmental and Sustainability Sciences, which will commence in Fall 2023; the RN to the Bachelor of Science in Nursing, launched in Fall 2022, which puts AUA at the forefront of having an incredibly important impact in healthcare; and the development of other academic programs that aim to make a significant difference in Armenia’s see AUA, page 7



COMMUNITY NEWS

Fr. Bedrossian Assumes Pastorship of Holy Cross Catholic Church

PRIEST, from page 6
the Pontifical Gregorian University of the same city, graduating in 2011. Finally, he received a master's degree in marriage and family from the University of Sagesse in Beirut in 2022. Along the way, he learned to speak five languages — Armenian, English, Turkish, Italian and Arabic.

After his priestly ordination in 2013 as a member of the Armenian Catholic Patriarchal Clergy Institute of Bzommar, he went to serve as assistant pastor at St. Savior's Armenian Catholic Church of Bourdj Hamoud, Lebanon until 2019. Afterwards, he served as assistant pastor of St. Gregory the Illuminator – St. Elijah Cathedral of the Armenian Catholic Church in Beirut until 2022, before coming to the Boston area. He also was spiritual director of the Armenian

Catholic youth of the Beirut diocese from 2014 to 2022 and organized many youth activities.

Fr. Ghazar says that not only does he like art, but he preaches faith through art. He sings opera as well as sacred music. In 2008 he took singing lessons in Rome from the Italian teacher Silvana Ferraro. He sang twice before Pope Benedict XVI, in 2010 and 2012, and has performed in many musical religious concerts. In 2018 in Beirut, he started taking vocal teaching lessons with the Armenian diva Arax Chekidjian, and still continues them.

He concluded, "My specific plan for my entire mission in New England and Boston is to preach Christ through Christian art and preserve the Armenian spiritual and cultural heritage."



April 9, 2015, at the Armenian Catholic Synod bishops with Patriarch Nerses Bedros XIX Tarmouni, Catholicos-Patriarch of the Armenian Catholics of Cilicia, thanking Pope Francis for presiding over Mass for the Armenian Genocide



Fr. Ghazar Bedrossian with the Armenian Catholic youth group in Poland in 2016 (World Youth Days),



On October 23, 2010, during the synod for Middle Eastern Churches in the Vatican, Fr. Ghazar Bedrossian was an assistant for the synod. On the last day Cardinal Leonardo Sandri, prefect of the Oriental Churches Congregation, asked him to sing in front of Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI. After he did it, Fr. Ghazar said they started to call him the Armenian Pavarotti.

Dean Highlights AUA Advances at LA Program

AUA, from page 6
education system. Dr. Melkonian also spoke about AUA's commitment to the enhancement of science, technology, and engineering, and the importance of bringing in humanities at a juncture that will equip graduates with the skills to navigate challenges outside of AUA. "It's not only about a student's specialization or major — we want graduates to be able to navigate some of the complex problems they will face when they leave the classroom and enter the global workforce, and a combination of

STEM with humanities is the answer," she expounded.

Speaking on the importance of alumni engagement and expounding on the benchmarks of alumni success, Melkonian introduced two alumni who were in attendance: Hayk Mamajanyan (LL.M '12) and Areg Margarian (M.S. in Earthquake Engineering '95).

Mamajanyan, founder and managing attorney at HVM Law Firm, reflected on his time at AUA and how his education provided him with the legal concepts and critical

thinking skills that allowed him to pave his own path forward. "I benefited a great deal from the institution, and in this age of AI revolution and with all the shifts taking place in the workforce and economy, I feel like AUA is the institution that is well prepared to address the changing needs of Armenia," he remarked.

Margarian, in his turn, spoke of his time at AUA as part of the university's early years and how what he saw and experienced reinforced his resolution to proceed as a civil and structural earthquake engineer. A

senior project manager at Anser Advisory, Margarian also encouraged AUA to consider bringing back the earthquake engineering program at AUA. He noted, "As a structural engineer, considering the booming construction industry in Armenia, I think that many buildings would benefit from retrofitting. It is a monumental task, even for a seismically active country like the United States, but it needs to be implemented."

Melkonian also spotlighted the faculty at AUA, and elaborated on how the University has enhanced recruitment over the years increasing the percentage of faculty that joined the institution with teaching experience in their graduate studies. "We're also working to provide ongoing professional development to engage faculty who may not have had that experience. One of the things that research tells us is experiential learning, project based learning, active learning, and high levels of interaction among students and faculty is a highly effective practice in education," she added.

Specific partnerships that bring value to AUA students were discussed, including the StemGen program, the collaborative student exchange program with Worcester Polytechnic Institute in Massachusetts, and various programs realized through the AUA Entrepreneurship and Product Innovation Center where students increase their startup potential. Dr. Melkonian added that open labs and enhanced science and technology initiatives help students work even better in interdisciplinary teams to address problems in Armenia, concluding with the fact that "We can only do this given our commitment to continued improvement and quality."

At the event, Melkonian was also awarded a Certificate of Recognition from California Senator Maria Elena Durazo's office, presented to her by District Representative Baysdar Thomasian.



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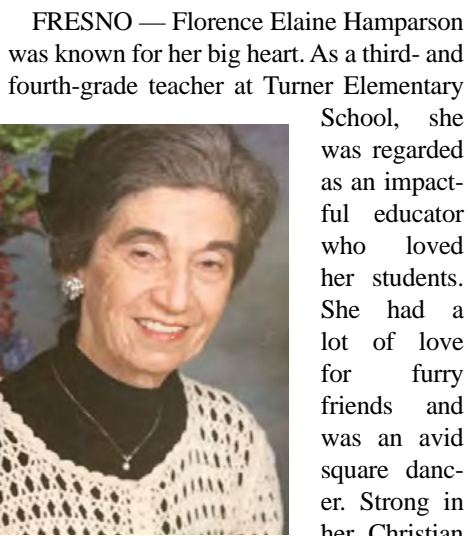
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COMMUNITY NEWS / OBITUARY

\$450,00 Gift from Hamparson Estate Benefits Armenian Studies at Fresno State

By Yesenia Fuentes and Benjamin Kirk



Elaine Hamparson

FRESNO — Florence Elaine Hamparson was known for her big heart. As a third- and fourth-grade teacher at Turner Elementary School, she was regarded as an impactful educator who loved her students. She had a lot of love for furry friends and was an avid square dancer. Strong in her Christian beliefs, Hamparson was a member of several churches around Fresno throughout her life.

“She loved her square dancing, she loved her Lord and she loved people,” said Patricia Towne, a family friend. “If you had a dog or a cat, she loved them too.”

Hamparson, a Fresno State alumnus, had a long career as a teacher in the Fresno Unified School District. She retired in 1995 and passed away in July 2021 at 85.

In late 2022, the Elaine Hamparson Trust gave \$900,000 to benefit students in two areas of Fresno State, the Armenian Studies Program the Lyles College of Engineering.

Of the total amount, \$450,000, went to the Armenian Studies Program. Those funds established the Florence Elaine Hamparson Armenian Memorial Quasi Endowed Fund to support the program’s rich tradition of research, publications, program outreach and conferences.

“The Armenian Studies Program represents the students and the community. I believe that gifts such as the Hamparson Endowment will encourage others to also participate in the success of the Program,” said Barlow Der Mugrdchian, director of the Armenian Studies Program. “The Armenian Studies Program is appreciative of this gift, and to the donor Florence Elaine Hamparson.”

The fund will bolster the program’s already active publishing schedule, which includes 20 books in The Armenian Series published through The Press at California State University, Fresno and four editions of their “Hye Sharzhoom” newspaper each year.

“It is so heartening to see such generosity displayed toward two colleges on campus that will have such a profound impact. The Elaine Hamparson Trust gift for Armenian Studies will bolster the students’ excellence in research, outreach, and conference participation,” said Dr. Honora Chapman, dean of the College of Arts and Humanities. “We are excited to see their new projects come to fruition that are made possible with these new funds, and we are truly grateful for this support.”

The other half, \$450,000, went to the Lyles College of Engineering to establish the Florence Elaine Hamparson Lyles College Quasi Endowed Fund to be used at the discretion of the dean to best benefit the college. Dean Ram Nunna has chosen to use a portion of the funds to support a scholarship honoring the legacy and life of Ms. Hamparson. Scholarship recipients will be part of the Lyles College of Engineering Honors Program.

The dean has allocated the remaining funds to support the construction of the

Lyles College of Engineering Student Center at the Engineering East building. The center will serve as a space for collaboration and technology-facilitated teamwork that will bring together students from all Lyles College disciplines.

“This timely gift will impact thousands of students each year,” said Dr. Ram Nunna, dean of the Lyles College of Engineering. “Our honors program attracts highly talented students from across our region to our

college, and this gift will allow us to grow the program. The new student center will be a place for student engagement and collaboration.”

Hamparson was born in Everett, Mass., in 1935. Her father, George Hamparson, was a business owner in Boston, but due to challenging circumstances, he moved his family to Fresno to start a new life. Once in Fresno, he founded the Palmolive Dry Cleaners at the corner of Palm and Olive Avenues.

COAF Soiree to Benefit Artsakh Programs

NEW YORK — The 13th Annual COAF Summer Soirée: Stand With Artsakh will be held on June 27 at Tribeca Rooftop in New York City to raise much needed funds for Children of Armenia Fund’s ongoing programs in Artsakh. This year’s Soirée will focus on supporting the Child & Family Center in Stepanakert, which offers a vital lifeline for children and families grappling with the ongoing aftermath of the 2020 War and the current crisis in Artsakh. The Center provides essential services, including early childhood education, speech therapy, and psychosocial support.

Since the 2020 War, COAF has launched a series of internationally coordinated initiatives aimed at promoting aid for the people of Artsakh. In the midst of the conflict, the organization provided critical humanitarian aid to those in dire need, and since then, has extended psychosocial services to those affected by the war in COAF-supported communities. Moreover, COAF has taken significant steps towards securing permanent housing for Armenians displaced from Artsakh, restoring dignified living conditions for over 100 individuals.

Despite the ongoing blockade, COAF has expanded its capacity to ensure that its full range of services is accessible to those who need them most. The Child & Family Center in Stepanakert, staffed by a team of dedicated educators, psychologists, speech therapists, and social workers, has undergone rigorous training to provide quality services that are on par with the exceptional standard of care offered at COAF’s rural centers in Armenia.

The Soirée will build on the success of COAF’s Spring Appeal for Artsakh, which has raised over \$60,000. Visit givebutter.com/coafsoiree2023 for more information on the 13th Annual COAF Summer Soirée: Stand With Artsakh.

OBITUARY

Dr. Jon A. Chilingirian

Professor at Brandeis, Tufts Medical School

NEWTON, Mass. — Jon A. Chilingirian of Mashpee and Newton passed away peacefully at home on May 5, 2023. He was 72.

He was the husband of Dianne (Poonarian) Chilingirian; father of Christine D. Chilingirian and her spouse Jen DeBerardinis and John A. Chilingirian; brother of Linda Savoy and her husband Paul and nephew and Godson of Sally Najarian of NJ. Additionally, he is survived by many nieces, nephews, relatives, and friends.

Professionally, Dr. Jon Chilingirian was a tenured professor at Brandeis University’s Heller School for Social Policy and Management where he taught for nearly 40 years, and adjunct professor of Public Health & Community Medicine at Tufts University School of Medicine. Jon was a force of nature, leading innovation at the frontiers of healthcare and management with unmatched passion and insight. Jon founded and directed unique programs including the joint MD-MBA program with Tufts’ medical school, one of the first such programs in the nation, and the Executive MBA (EMBA) for physicians. Since launching in 2016, the EMBA program has graduated over 200 physician leaders, advancing the frontiers of healthcare in the US and worldwide. Before his graduate studies, he served as Assistant Health Commissioner for the City of Boston and went on to receive his Ph.D. from the Sloan School of Management at MIT.

He was a national leader in partnering with medical societies to advance pro-



fessional development for physicians, including work with the American College of Surgeons, European Health Leaders’ Program, and with the Hanley Center in Maine. Internationally, Jon was a visiting professor of organizational behavior at Insead for 23 years, and taught doctors in Abu Dhabi, Singapore, South Africa, and in Fontainebleau, France, where he and his family spent a beautiful year in 1997. Among his proudest moments, this April, Jon was awarded the Heller Teaching Excellence Award based on enthusiastic votes by EMBA students. Jon led innovation at the frontiers of healthcare and management with unmatched passion and insight, and will be remembered as an exceptional colleague, great friend, and mentor to so many.

Services were held at St. Stephen’s Armenian Church, 38 Elton Ave., Watertown on Friday, May 12. Interment was at Oak Grove Cemetery, Falmouth on May 13.

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COMMUNITY NEWS

Balakian's Siamanto Program at NAASR Focuses on Humanities In Medicine

BALAKIAN, from page 1
them to write a cycle of 13 poems." The poems were published in Armenian in 1911 in Constantinople.

The letters themselves are lost, Balakian said.

The poet Balakian, a professor at Hamilton College, and the winner of numerous awards for his works, from the PEN/Martha Albrand Prize for the Art of the Memoir (*Black Dog of Fate*) to the Pulitzer (*Ozone Journal*), recalled his family history, in which medicine figured highly; both his father and grandfather were physicians.

Balakian explored the friendship between the doctor and the poet in 1909, and of the former's eventual fleeing from the cosmopolitan circles in Constantinople and Vienna to Indiana in the aftermath of the Genocide.

"Adana is horrific, shocking," he said. "You've lived through the Hamidian massacres of the 1890s, you have seen this moment of 1908 and the declaration of the velvet revolution of overthrowing the Sultan and the celebration of the new age and multiculturalism and you are thinking, 'maybe the nightmare is over.' Not even a year has passed when the explosion of Adana happens to the Armenians of the city and the surrounding areas," he said. The key, he said, was the "backlash" against the gains of the rights for the Christian minority.

"It really was a canary in a mine for 1915," he said. "Ethnic minorities are not going to become free and even limitedly equal," for Christians, Jews, or other "gavours," or even Arabs and Kurds, who happened to be Muslim as well.

"The ruins, the accounts of massacre, pillaging and looting, so much as we know in the genocidal paradigm and the morphology of genocide can be connected to avarice and booty and theft of wealth and property. And that certainly happened in Adana. Armenians were prosperous as were Greeks. A small bourgeoisie that was bitterly resented by the Muslim underclass that were often rural and agrarian," he added.

A Young Doctor

Diran Balakian was born in Tokat. He

got a scholarship to study at the Echmiadzin academy. "He did very well in his Echmiadzin studies and got a scholarship to the Nersisian College in Tiflis," Balakian noted. From there, he went to Leipzig, Germany to attend medical school and became an ophthalmologist.

At one point, Balakian said, his grandfather worked on a dig in Ani with Georgian archeologist Nikolai Marr. In fact, he was probably there with his cousin, Grigoris Balakian, the translation of whose memoirs, *Armenian Golgotha*, the younger Balakian and Aris Sevag published in 2010.

Diran Balakian, after his studies in Vienna, eventually came back to Constantinople to work. Soon after, the Adana Massacres took place in April 1909, and the Armenian patriarchate "rounded up a group of Armenians to do rescue and relief work," including author Zabel Yesayan. "She and my grandfather were in that same group that went from Bolis to Adana," Peter Balakian observed.

"After Adana, he went back to Constantinople where he married my grandmother, Koharik Panossian, who was the daughter of a wealthy Bolis family. Her father, Moorad Panossian, owned coal mines and they had a big mining enterprise. They lost everything as most families did, during the Genocide," Balakian recalled.

"He was conscripted into the Ottoman Army as all Ottoman physicians were. He was given the rank of captain. He was put in a military base in Soma, on the western Turkish coast. That's just the ghoulish kind of Shakespearean drama in my head: what did it mean to work for the Ottoman army while the Ottoman government was massacring, murdering, raping your entire ethnic group," Balakian said. His grandfather left little information about that.

In 1922, the family fled Turkey for good, while his father was 2. "My grandfather somehow managed to land in Indianapolis, at a hospital, where he was accepted as an attending, pending the passing of the medical board." He was 46 at that time.

"What a soft life I've had, compared to what these people went through," he said,

with awe. He added that his grandfather had to pass his boards in English — his fifth language — in his mid-40s.

"My grandfather got us here by virtue of his studying, his education and his professional life," he added.

Bright Star

Balakian was able to find out more about Siamanto's connections though his great-aunt Verjin.

"My auntie Verjin ... remembered how popular he was. He was a sensation," Balakian said, likening his popularity to that of the Beat Poets of the 1950s, or the Slam poets more recently. "The Armenian cultural scene was undergoing a marvelous revival from the last decade of the 19th century to the first decade and a half of the 20th century, before the Ottoman government arrested 250 intellectuals on April 24, at one of the beginnings of what became the Armenia Genocide. Why were they targeted? Because they were effective, they were the voice of the people. ... They had a following. They had impact. It reminds us of the power of literature at any time, especially in a pre-screen age."

Siamanto, he said, had been a bardic poem, who often recited his poems. In a way, Balakian explained, he was like William Butler Yeats in Ireland, Walt Whitman in the US, Pablo Neruda in Chile, poets who "saw themselves as embodying the people of the nation."

"Siamanto was one of them," he added.

Before writing the Genocide, he explained, Siamanto was tackling the myths and mythology of Armenian identity.

The singular "brutality, killing, blood, beheading, and particular focus on brutality done to women," changed Siamanto forever. "These poems were witnessing the barbarism of the ottoman state."

With Adana, Siamanto broke his literary streak of romanticism with the evils and horrors of the Genocide, Balakian noted.

"He is engaged in probing the tortured human body and that's because my grandfather, the physician, was witnessing and writing," he said, adding he assumed his grandfather must have been a good writer. "The power of those depictions and representations gave rise to these poems."

Peter Balakian read his translation of one of the most famous of Siamanto's poem, "The Dance," which features a graphic description of the torture and killing of 20 brides by Ottoman soldiers.

"You can see the poems veer away from anything romantic," he said.

The imagery was vivid, shocking and visceral, about whipping, dousing with kerosene, crucifixions.

Asked about family lore regarding the Siamanto poems and the family connection, he referred to another of his books, *The Black Dog of Fate*, in which he wrote about his coming to terms with and understanding the Armenian Genocide. "When I am scratching my head about why there is so much silence in my family about the events of 1915. I understand a level of it, concealing trauma from children," he said, "I understand there can be some repression, but later on in life, I go on to become a writer and an academic and two of my aunts became scholars and I wonder why."

The Balakians, he said, never talked about the family history but only about their grandfather's achievements. "I don't think fathers were 'parenting' in the early

part of the 20th century," he said. "As an Armenian-American friend said, 'we didn't have dads; we had fathers.'"

Medical Ties

The NAASR program was co-sponsored by the Armenian American Medical Association (AAMA) of Boston. Dr. Armineh Mirzabegian, who is a member of both the Board of Directors of the AAMA as well as that of NAASR, offered opening statements about the importance of art for medical professionals. Also speaking was Dr. Rosalynn Nazarian, the president of the



Armineh Mirzabegian at the NAASR program (Ken Martin Photo)

AAMA, who in turn introduced Dr. Elizabeth Gaufberg, Associate Professor of Medicine and Psychiatry at Harvard Medical School and Director of the Cambridge Health Alliance Center for Professional and Academic Development, about the role of humanities in medicine.

Gaufberg spoke about how Balakian had introduced Mirzabegian to her, knowing that she had an interest in the humanities as well.

Also speaking was Lisa Wong, a musician and pediatrician at the Massachusetts General Hospital, who works with Gaufberg, and is a strong advocate for incorporating the arts into medicine. "As I was



Dr. David Hatem at NAASR (Ken Martin Photo)

listening to the very difficult and painful poetry, I thought not only does art document for us, but it captures an emotion for us," Wong said.

"We as physicians have the privilege and opportunity to be with people at their most joyful, but also their most painful and vulnerable times. As we walk the journey with them, I think what a privilege," she noted.

Another speaker was Dr. David Hatem of the UMass Chan Medical School, co-chair of the humanities in medicine committee at the UMass medical school. He said, "We do tell them, is professional identity formation, how you turn people from laypersons into doctors. What we tell them is we admit humans to medical school and we want to make sure we graduate humans who retain their humanity. And that's not always the way medical education is."

One of his students, Lori Sahakian, also offered her comments about Hatem's humanities course.

Bloody News from My Friend is available at NAASR, Amazon and other bookstores.



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121st Diocesan Assembly Takes Place in Dallas

ASSEMBLY, from page 6

Elections and Reports

Business moved forward at a brisk pace, with Nominating Committee chair Deacon Serop Demirjian (St. Gregory of Narek, Cleveland, OH) taking to the podium to explain the secure method of voting that would be employed throughout the proceedings. Continuing an innovation that had emerged from the experience of holding assembly meetings virtually during the pandemic, all voting was conducted using a secure online balloting platform.

Each ballot was preceded by an official roll call of delegates, with the list of names read out by Diocesan Council member Roseann Manoogian Attar (St. John, Southfield, MI). (See below for the table of election results.)

As business went forward, Fr. Andreas Garabedian (St. Gregory the Illuminator, Chicago, IL) presented the report of the Clergy Conference, which had met in the days prior to the main gathering. The delegates also heard a report on the Parish Council Chairs Meeting, which had immediately preceded the inaugural session. Jay Kapur (Armenian Church of Our Saviour, Worcester, MA) delivered the report on behalf of the assembled parish council chairs of the Eastern Diocese.

Diocesan Council chairman Fr. Krikor Sabounjian (Holy Translators, Framingham, MA) delivered the report of the Diocesan Council, which included remarks from the Interim Executive Director of the Diocese, Fr. Davit Karamyan; the Interim Director of Diocesan Ministries, Fr. Hratch Sargsyan; as well as short presentations from the Armenian Church Youth Organization of America (ACYOA), Sacred Music Council, Krikor and Clara Zohrab Information Center, and the Diocesan departments of Children and Family Ministry, Youth and young Adult Ministry, Communications, and Development.

In the course of the sessions, delegates

also heard reports from Archbishop Vicken Aykazian, the Diocesan Legate and Ecumenical Director; Aram Hintlian of the Ararat Youth and Conference Center; Fr. Mardiros Chevian of St. Nersess Seminary; Marie Vanerian, Elizabeth Vranka, and Melanie Dadourian of the Armenian Church Endowment Fund (ACEF); and Garnik Nanaougoulian of the Fund for Armenian Relief (FAR).

Special presentations and updates also came from Ara Araz (St. Leon, Fair Lawn, NJ), on developments concerning the worldwide Armenian Church's National Ecclesiastical Assembly; and from Paul Mardoian (Sts. Joachim and Anne, Palos Heights, IL), on the ongoing pilot project, involving several Diocesan parishes that are experimentally replacing the current dues-based membership system with a "stewardship" system based on voluntary contributions.

Restoring the "National Home" of Armenian Americans

A special two-part presentation came from the St. Vartan Cathedral Renovation and Fundraising Committees. Richard Palian (St. Gregory the Enlightener, White Plains, NY) walked the delegates through a detailed presentation on the large-scale project to renovate and restore the Diocesan Cathedral in New York City. After a comprehensive review of the structure by a major firm specializing in the restoration of historic buildings, a four-phase project has been approved by the Diocesan Council and Board of Trustees that will (1) perform urgently needed immediate repairs to the cathedral's roof and dome, (2) repair the cathedral's exterior stone façade, (3) make mechanical improvements and update the interior systems of the cathedral structure, and (4) replace and repair the outdoor plaza and sidewalks.

The cost of the project, which is scheduled to begin in the summer of 2023 and continue in discrete phases to 2027, will be \$25 million. To address the fundraising

needed to accomplish the project, Oscar Tatosian (St. Gregory the Illuminator, Chicago, IL) delivered an inspiring presentation titled "Renewing the Vision, Cementing the Future." He outlined St. Vartan Cathedral's meaning to the entire Diocese, and its longstanding role as the "national home" of Armenians in America. A short video screened for the delegates combined archival footage of the cathedral's 1968 consecration, with images of its majestic architectural details and its notable events through six decades of activity.

Reflecting on the founding generation of Genocide survivors who conceived and built the cathedral, against great odds and obstacles, Tatosian said: "Our founders had faith in the God that had rescued them from death, and brought them to a new land. And they had faith in us — the future generations — that we would continue what they started, and keep it strong and secure."

To conclude the presentation, it was announced that a \$150 thousand "matching challenge" had been made by an anonymous donor for the Diocesan Assembly weekend. Over the subsequent two days individual lay delegates, clergy, and parishes showed their support for the overall project by making pledges that surpassed the matching challenge target. That amount will join the \$3.5 million dollars already pledged to the restoration project in an initial "quiet phase" of fundraising, which will soon advance into the broader community.

Primate's Address

Friday's Assembly sessions were devoted to the formal address of the Primate, and his introduction of two large initiatives for the coming year: the celebration of the 125th anniversary of the Diocese's founding, and the inauguration of an "action plan" for the Diocese titled "Growing In Faith Together."

In his first official address to representatives from across the Eastern Diocese, Parsamyan also expressed more personal thoughts about his ministry and outlook —

especially how these had been affected by his brush with physical injury and hospitalization.

In remarks delivered with visible emotion, Parsamyan said: "When I was in the hospital last summer, one realization kept coming to me: that life is fragile, and we take so much for granted. When you're lying in a bed with your leg bones shattered, you find so much meaning, and joy, in even the smallest things of life. The simplest actions, that you once took for granted, suddenly hold such significance. You find yourself cherishing every moment, every little step forward, as a great triumph."

He went on: "The same is true of our church. Sometimes people take it for granted that their local Armenian parish is there — will always be there — when we need it. That we have a Diocese that began in the 19th century, and has existed for 125 years. That we have a precious, magnificent cathedral that proclaims our faith and presence to the entire world!

"All of that ... is in our hands. We cannot — we must not — take any of it for granted. What we have all received as our heritage, is now our task, to embrace and make our own. Nourishing that spirit will draw us closer to one another; closer to our heritage; closer to our Lord."

He offered those reflections in the context of speaking about the current year's historical significance. "You may be aware that 2023 is a milestone year for our Diocese," he told the delegates. "It was in 1898 that the great Catholics of All Armenians Mkrtych Khrimian — 'Khrimian Hayrig' — established the Armenian Church's first diocese in the New World. So that makes this year the 125th anniversary of our Diocese. We are planning a celebration for next fall."

He said he envisions that celebration as "a source of pride for us; a chance to look back and celebrate our past." But the Primate also expressed a hope that this "will

continued on next page



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COMMUNITY NEWS

from previous page

be a time of new beginnings. We must not get stuck in the past. Rather, we should let it inspire us, encourage us, refresh our spirits and unleash our aspiration to move forward.”

In his address, the Primate expressed his gratitude to the Diocesan Council, as well as to the administration and staff of the Diocesan Center, noting several people who had retired and moved on from their positions, and several who had taken up new roles and duties in the preceding year.

These staffing, planning, and programmatic developments aim at “raising strong, educated Armenian Christians, who are deeply connected to our church, love our language and history, and take strength from our rich cultural and religious heritage,” he said. “Strong faithful people make a strong parish. And strong parishes make a strong Diocese.”

In the course of his address, Parsamyan showed two short videos: one a “teaser” video about the Diocese’s 125th anniversary, the other introducing the “Growing In Faith Together” — or “G.I.F.T.” — action plan. The latter was the subject of his concluding remarks, leading into a session of “roundtable discussions,” in which the delegates discussed aspects of the plan in small groups.

Taking inspiration from the Diocesan Mission Statement, the G.I.F.T. plan seeks to energize and develop the church’s activities revolving around five areas of ministry: Worship, Education, Witness, Service, and the “Common Life in Christ.”

Final Blessings

The final Assembly session began with a requiem service for departed delegates, clergy, and Diocesan leaders who had passed away in the previous year.

It also saw the passage of a balanced revised budget for 2023 and a balanced budget for 2024 — both introduced and explained with clarity by longtime Diocesan Council treasurer Roseann Manoogian Attar.

A single proposal to ascertain the level of insurance suitable for artwork in the possession of the Diocese was referred to the Diocesan Council and Board of Trustees for their continued action. The delegates also affirmed a resolution to move forward with fundraising for the St. Vartan Cathedral renovation project, among other matters.

Gratitude was expressed to outgoing Diocesan Council chair Fr. Krikor Sabounjian, vice chair Lisa Kouzoujian (St. Gregory the Enlightener, White Plains, NY), treasurer Roseann Manoogian Attar, and member Fr. Vasken Kouzoujian (Holy Trinity, Cambridge, MA), as well as outgoing Board of Trustees member Edward Korkoian (St. John, Southfield, MI).

Before adjourning the 121st Diocesan Assembly, Primate Fr. Mesrop Parsamyan reflected on the faithful men and women remembered in the requiem service — and renewed the tone struck at the start of the gathering, of gratitude and togetherness.

“I want to close by saying what a blessing it is to be able to gather together, person-to-person, in this Assembly,” he told the delegates. “Each of you is tremendously valuable to this gathering, to our Diocese, and to our church overall. Each of you brings something unique and precious to our community life. So thank you for your involvement, your commitment, and your ongoing prayers for our people, our homeland, and our church.”

The 122nd Diocesan Assembly, meeting in May of 2024, will go forward as an in-person gathering in Springfield, MA, hosted by the city’s St. Mark Armenian Church.

AAF Delivers \$1.1 Million of Medicines to Armenia and Artsakh in Last 4 Months

GLENDALÉ — In the first four months of 2023, the Armenia Artsakh Fund (AAF) delivered to Armenia and Artsakh six shipments of medicines valued at \$1.1 million of which \$152,000 was for Artsakh. All six shipments of medicines were donated by Direct Relief of Santa Barbara, California, at the request of the AAF.

Even though Azerbaijan has blockaded the Lachin Corridor which links Artsakh to Armenia for more than four months, the International Committee of the Red Cross was able to deliver the urgently-needed six AAF shipments of medicines to



Artsakh.

The medicines sent to Artsakh included 350 bags of Metronidazole, 118 bottles of Isoflurane (Forane), 4230 vials of Tranexamic Acid, 12,500 vials of Dexamethasone,

15,080 bags of Sodium Chloride, several cases of Olmesartan, Amlodipine Besylate, Colesevelan, Naproxen and N-95 Masks. In addition the shipments to Armenia and Artsakh included 1,568 cans of Similac infant formula, and 1,670 units of Vital oral nutritional supplement, both of which are desperately-needed, particularly in Artsakh.

“We highly appreciate the life-saving medicines donated by Direct Relief for Armenia and Artsakh and the assistance of the International Committee of the Red Cross to deliver them to the 120,000 Armenians blockaded in Artsakh,” stated Harut Sassounian, President of Armenia Artsakh Fund.

In the past 34 years, including the shipments under its predecessor, the United Armenian Fund, the AAF delivered to Armenia and Artsakh a grand total of \$973 million worth of humanitarian aid, mostly medicines, on board 158 airlifts and 2,555 sea containers.

For more information, call the AAF office or email sassoun@pacbell.net.

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Arts & Culture

AMAA Reimagines Fundraising with Innovative Event at MoMA

By Lori Youmshajekian

PARAMUS, N.J. — Over two sold-out days in April, the Armenian Missionary Association of America (AMAA) New York/New Jersey Orphan and Child Care Committee brought 100 guests to the Museum of Modern Art for an introduction to one of America's most acclaimed modern artists.

Breaking the mold of traditional fundraising, the "Rendezvous at the MoMA" took guests on a guided tour of Georgia O'Keeffe's retrospective, rated as one of the best exhibitions of 2023 by the auction house Christie's. The tour was followed by lunch at the museum's in-house restaurant, The Modern.

It was a fitting venue to play host to the latest event from a reinvigorated NY/NJ Orphan and Child Care Committee.

The exhibition, "To see takes time," encouraged guests to witness the evolution of O'Keeffe's work and appreciate each incremental improvement that underpins the technical rigor of her famous floral masterpieces.

Behind each elaborate orchid is her painstaking process of trial, error, and transformation — with the 120 works on display revealing just how much discipline the flowers required to come to life. The guests



Co-Chairs Vicki Shoghag Hovanessian and Seta Nalbandian

were asked to reflect on how these slow but deliberate improvements helped her achieve an ambitious artistic vision.

This innovative fundraising effort was the vision of Committee Chair Vicki Shoghag Hovanessian, a lifelong collector and chair of the Collectors of Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago. She ended her welcome to the guests by quoting Georgia O'Keeffe's exhibition title, "To see takes time," adding, "To make friends takes time. Thus, with this exhibit we have all become friends and hopefully will enhance future AMAA Orphan and Child Care projects."

The proceeds will assist children and families in Armenia and Artsakh to provide for their basic nutritional, financial, educational, and spiritual needs.

This was the first 'Rendezvous' in a series of uniquely artistic events the Committee is diligently planning. Each will aspire to build relationships among supporters while introducing the AMAA's mission to new faces.

see MOMA, page 13



Santosh Kumari Aror *The Indian from Armenia, With Universal Values*

By Artsvi Bakhchinyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN — Many in Armenia know Santosh Kumari Arora from mass media as an Indian living in Armenia for many years and speaking fluent Armenian. Born in Delhi, in 1955, in 1975 to 1980 she studied at Leningrad (now Saint Petersburg) Zhdanov State University, Faculty of Philology. Her master's thesis was devoted to the comparative syntactic analysis of allied words and word combinations in Russian and Hindi. In 1980 she married an Armenian and moved to Armenia. In 1987 Santosh finished her Ph.D. thesis on Comparative Phraseology in Russian and Hindi. From 1996 to 2017 she worked at Yerevan State University, Faculty of Oriental Studies, where she taught a number of Indological disciplines such as Hindi, Sanskrit, Indian Literature, Epic Studies, Mythology, Ethnography, etc. Since 2017 she has been working at the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian-Armenian University, teaching Hindi, Sanskrit, Punjabi, Indian literature, epic studies, mythology, as well as Russian for Indian students.

Santosh Kumari Arora has authored numerous methodological programs for teaching Indological disciplines, as well as numerous scholarly articles and papers on Indology, connected with the comparative analysis of different languages and problems of translation. She is also engaged in translating Indian poetry and prose into Russian and Armenian, as well as Russian and Armenian literature into Hindi.

Her house is open to everybody interested in India, its language, culture and cuisine, that warm and heartfelt hostess always ready to share generously.

We have known each other since 2010. Our conversation took place at my apartment, and, needless to say, in more than fluent Armenian. A longtime resident of Armenia, by using "we" and "us," Santosh refers not only the Indians, but also the Armenians.

Dear Santosh, once you were the only Indian living in Armenia.

Yes, and I am still the only Indian who has an Armenian passport.

The Indian presence in Yerevan has increased significantly. In which direction are the Armenian-Indian ties developing?

It is a very good question. At one time, about 15,000 Indians came to Armenia to find work, or agents brought them here to take them to Europe as labor. I divide these people into two groups. Those who come to Armenia without money, only to work and send money home, they have nothing to give to Armenia, and nothing to take from Armenia. It is very likely that they will make wrong steps, which is not beneficial for both nations. That should be excluded. And if tourists, students or entrepreneurs come, they will make investments and increase the budget of Armenia, they are more than welcome! Many may accuse me of speaking from the side of the Armenians, but it happens unintentionally: I know this nation, if you don't disturb them, they will host you, give you bread and water, in the villages even they will give you a place to sleep if it's late and go next day. There is no need to deceive that nation. That's why only good people should come here, and I am very happy that the number of Indians is increasing, Indian restaurants are opening, let them prosper, and according to that, the Armenian budget will increase.

Recently, an Indian cultural house was opened in Zeytun district. What other Armenian-Indian projects would you like to be implemented?

I have proposed several big projects. First of all, cooperation between the Armenian and Indian diasporas. It will bring many results. Then, it is very important to have a direct Yerevan-Delhi flight, which not only Armenians and Indians, but also people from other countries can use, to make Yerevan a transit zone and travel to India from here. In that case, many Indians will want to come to Armenia, and both nations will benefit.

see AROR, page 13

Books

The Pleasures of Wonder: Mariam Petrosyan's *The Gray House*

By Arpi Sarafian

"So I'm not crazy? Or if I am, I'm not alone."

"That last part looks more like it."

The Gray House

Mariam Petrosyan's *The Gray House* (amazon crossing, 2017) opens with a boy and a woman carrying a suitcase approaching "the place," an ugly gray house at the edge of town, where children "like that" are housed. The little boy is armless, a white jacket with long empty sleeves hugging his shoulders. The old structure looming in front of them has, in fact, been home to generations of "such people." Its inhabitants are all "not-quite-right," mostly children with physical disabilities, "silly, happy smiles" and "vacant stares." Each child is given a nickname upon arrival, usually based on the child's handicap. As we watch the



children grow — all are younger than eighteen — forge friendships, fight and reconcile, we learn to cherish them, no matter what their deformity. With her meticulous details, hilarious descriptions, and much empathy, Petrosyan depicts these kids as credible human beings. She delights in describing their response to the "one piece of luggage per person" warning for their summer trip: "The seniors acquired bags the size of trunks. The juniors had to improvise, sewing additional pockets and elastic bands to their old ones . . . [They] spent their entire days packing and unpacking, in search of the precise formula for the contents of a bag before it burst at the seams . . . there were always more things that simply had to go inside."

Indeed, we almost forget that the kids are bound to wheel chairs, or that they need to be lifted to the windowsill so they can peer out of the window at the yard below. While for the Outsides (name given in the book to the neighborhoods surrounding the Gray House) these kids still carry the

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ARTS & CULTURE

The Indian from Armenia, With Universal Values

AROR, from page 12

A lot has been said about you on TV and other media, about the help you provided to Artsakh during the first war, about the Armenian family you formed. However, in recent years we got to know you as a lecturer, scientist and translator. What is the state of Indology in Armenia? And what are your own academic works?

In Armenia, Hindi is taught only in Russian-Armenian University, at the Faculty of Oriental Studies. There is a big Vedic center there, the president of which, is me. I will strongly urge students and everyone to come and study Indian, there is a lot of work to be done that I cannot do it alone. Many specialists are needed to teach different Indian languages and various subjects: Indian culture, history, literature. We also have rich Armenian literature, which should be presented to the Indian people, and in Indian, a lot of Vedic literature, epics, Upanishads, which should be translated. All eight volumes of Rabindranath Tagore (some of his works have been translated into Armenian by Hovhanness Tumanyan's sons) should be translated for the Armenian people. Recently, a textbook in Armenian language and transcription in Hindi was published. Many people suggested me to give the transcription in English or Russian, I said that the phonetics of Armenian and Hindi are similar, so it would be best to give it in Armenian. Also, an illustrated dictionary is ready in four languages (Armenian, Hindi, English, Russian), with pictures of school-children, very cute. Armenian children read Hindi very correctly. An Armenian-Indian phrasebook is also under preparation — we have no sponsors to publish it. I have many articles about Armenian, Russian, Indian phrases and the difficulties in translating them. I have translated samples from Hovhanness Tumanyan into Hindi; I have started to translate *The Daredevils of Sasun* epic. I also translated the entire book of the Indian poet Dr. Dina Nath Sharan into Russian and Armenian. He dedicated all his romantic poems not to his mistress, but to his wife. Many people learned from him and started praising their wives in their poems (*laughs*).

And you also represent Armenia at international conferences.

I was appointed as a peace ambassador by the International Peace Federation. It is not important that you have that on paper — you must be peace-loving in your heart and soul and connect people to each other. I participated in meetings in Vietnam, Korea, elsewhere. Once in Georgia, women from Azerbaijan also participated in a peace conference. They came with accusations, but after my speech, they brought us gifts to take to the Armenian women. We had only one box of Grand Candy chocolates; I gave it to them and told them to make the chocolates into a thousand pieces and distribute them to Azerbaijani mothers from Armenian mothers. These Azeri women came full of hatred, but when they parted from us, they were already having tears in their eyes.

Before coming to Armenia, had you heard about Armenians? One time there were significant Armenian communities in India.

I did not know anything about Indo-Armenians. During the Soviet Union, in India, we used to get the magazine *Soviet Woman* in Hindi, which I used to read once in a while. For me, the Soviet Union seemed like a paradise, where there are no homeless, hungry or unemployed people. I

won a competition and decided to go and study in the Soviet Union, learn from them, come and change our country. So, in Leningrad I had an Armenian friend who gave me *History of the Armenian People*, Stepan Zoryan's novels *Pap the King* and *Armenian Fortress*, Franz Werfel's *The Forty Days of Musa Dagh*, all in Russian. I haven't been able to read *Musa Dagh* to the end; I always cry in the middle. I couldn't even watch the movie until the end (by the way, the main actor is Indian). You cannot forgive yourself that all this happened; I feel guilty too. Then I met my future husband and we moved to Armenia.

And what were your first cultural shocks?

First we lived in Shgharshik, a village in the Talin region — the birthplace of my husband. I learned that Armenia is a beautiful country, but my first acquaintance started with a stony Talin with almost no nature. But after some months we moved to Yerevan and I already started to long for that stony landscape. By the way, until now, wherever I travel, including India, I begin to miss Armenia very soon and become impatient to return home.

The whole Talin region learned about me, and soon Shgharshik was called by people Hndiki gyugh (Indian's village). Many women came to see me, having seen Indians only in films. Some even would lift my sari to see whether I am barefoot. My mother-in-law used to rebuke them, but I was not against satisfying their curiosity.

When my first child was born, they baptized him in Yerevan's St. Sargis Church, and they baptized me too without telling me beforehand. I was a very staunch Hindu, so at first I was upset, but I thought that it is too late to change anything, so I read the Bible and saw there are almost the same things in Hinduism. In the 1980s, Armenians rarely had Bibles. I started buying and giving them to people, saying: this should be a book for your table, you should not only read, but also apply it. It was a time of atheism, People have taken the name of Christ, but they don't want to have a Bible. I was scolded a lot, but I continued to present Bibles. I get satisfaction by doing it, it gave me peace.

They say that Armenians and Indians are similar. Are they?

I consider that we are the same nation. This is like a hypothesis, but I feel it inside. As a philologist I can say we share many common words. Go to the Indian and Armenian house — you cannot distinguish their profession and income, but they will host you highly and put whatever they have on the table. Both Armenians and Indians are very hospitable people, they always respect elders, we bow down to elders. In particular, both our people respect and even adore our mothers, and both peoples have many poems about mothers.

What do Armenians have to learn from Indians?

Armenians do not have the ability to concede, they have to learn that from the Indians. If you are at peace in your soul, you will concede. In Armenia, everyone feels himself like a king, it cannot be like that. We should love each other so much that we concede the other person first. When we have this culture, there will be no more accidents on the street, we will not fall down, we will not get sick, we will not make hasty decisions. When the time comes, we have to take a deep breath and concede. If the Armenians love and support each other, there is no nation like

them! I adore this nation, especially their women. I have learned many things from this nation's women: they are very patient, pure, dedicated. I bow before the Armenian woman!

And you gave five children to the Armenian people.

Yes, they all consider themselves Armenians.

I remember, your son Hayk used to read and write in Hindi.

All my children know Hindi. Hayk was born in India, studied in Thailand, but in the 9th grade he applied for an Armenian passport to serve in the army. When Hayk was in Sweden, one of our friends called and said that their Indian neighbor had been invited to play a special Indian game, when someone sings a song, it ends with the letter, the other player sings a song that starts with the same letter. Hayk has defeated all of them. Those people are ashamed, that an Armenian defeated the Indians in singing Indian (*laughs*).

When we met before, you were wearing a sari, now you are in Punjabi clothes. I wish our Armenian women were in national costumes too. The late artist Lusik Aguletsi was the only one who always wore national garments.

Lusik was a very good friend of mine. I have always said this: Armenian people, you have lost your face. You immediately recognize the Arabs or the Indians on the stage, but not the Armenians, who turned to Europe. Each of our regions had its own costume, I have a map of Armenia

with pictures of the national garments of its different places. My children wear hats and vests with Armenian costume patterns. Now I am thinking of ordering pieces with Armenian patterns in India and making them into bags for notebooks, so that anyone who sees them will know that they are Armenians.

Santosh, among your many jobs, you also find time to teach at the Indian Guru dwara (Temple of the Teacher) center opened in Yerevan.

I think that universal values should be taught in schools in Armenia, as in the whole world. The Armenian people should accept that knowledge with great gratitude. After all, we must understand that we all have one father. It does not matter what religion, what nation we belong to or people accept or not accept him, but they must understand that he is an ocean of peace, an ocean of love, an ocean of knowledge. We teach those universal values in the Temple of the Teacher. And we do it for free, just in case you want to know and reveal the knowledge that you actually have beforehand. Who is not fond of love, compassion, peace, who does not have a thirst for knowledge? You have to learn to subdue your mind, to lead it in the right direction. Man is the driver of his mind, he must understand where to take his mind, right, left, upwards?

Straight up! Upwards! To positiveness!

Upwards! To God! Whoever has God, he will never suffer, God will always be a guardian!



A group of guests during day one of the event

AMAA Reimagines Fundraising with Innovative Event at MoMA

MOMA, from page 12

Seta Nalbandian, Co-Chair of the Committee, described the MoMA experience as “enlightening, enriching and enticing” for the attendees. “Another ‘Rendezvous’ in the arts is definitely on the horizon for the Committee,” said Mrs. Nalbandian.

The event was executed by the reinvigorated NY/NJ Orphan and Child Care Committee, which includes Lucienne Aynilian, Anita Buchakjian, Dr. Celeste Helvacian, Vicki Shoghag Hovannessian, Seta Nalbandian, Jennifer Telfeyan-LaRoe, and Kathy Voskian, and was assisted by AMAA staff members Christine Kutlu and Magda Poulos.

“AMAA salutes the innovative spirit of the Committee co-chairs and the diligence of its members in planning this elating experience benefitting the children of Armenia,” said Zaven Khanjian, AMAA Executive Director/CEO.



ARTS & CULTURE

Recipe Corner



by Christine
Vartanian



Dawn Essegian Lajeunesse's Lahmajoun

SARATOGA SPRINGS, NY — “I grew up in Troy, NY, the daughter of an Armenian meat and grocery man and a stay-at-home mom. We lived in the city, but I developed an early love of rural life through frequent visits to my cousins’ homes in the country and at an overnight YWCA camp. I took dance lessons, and was dragged kicking and screaming to piano lessons. Eight years of lessons, and I can barely play,” says author Dawn Essegian Lajeunesse.

“My early years were spent in a three-family house purchased by my grandfather in 1914 and located a block away from our church. My grandfather, Marderos Essegian, immigrated from his ancestral home along the Silk Road in Kharput



(Harput) to Troy in 1895, and was joined by my grandmother Soutani in 1907. Sadly, both died before I was born. My grandfather was one of the founders of our church (seated on the left in the photo below of the original church elders). I had an interest in all things medical, but when it came time to make career decisions, I wanted to be a writer. Convinced by parents and guidance counselors that it wasn’t a practical career, I opted for nursing. That choice had one fatal flaw – I fainted at the sight of blood. Somehow, I made it through the nursing program at Hartwick College in Oneonta, NY.”

“Our church began as a Presbyterian Armenian Church — about half the original congregation was Congregational and the other half Presbyterian, but only the Presbyterian

hierarchy offered some financial assistance. Armenians are strong willed. Within a few years (1910), about half the congregation, led by the Congregationalists — including my grandfather and his brother — broke away from the Presbyterians and started their own church, holding services in borrowed space until building the church I knew in 1916. The tragedy of the Armenian Genocide pulled the Troy Protestant Armenians together to support the survivors as they arrived in waves. The two Protestant churches came together again, their first official service together was held in 1919. The original church ceased services and the building was turned into a parsonage. The new name of the combined church, United Armenian Calvary Congregational Church (UACCC), reflected the joining together to honor those masses of Armenian men, women, and children who were lost at the hands of the Ottomans. A stained glass window in the church balcony honored and remembered those who were lost.”

“I obtained an MS degree in Health Services Administration, and eventually retired from the New York State Department of Health’s AIDS Institute. During the last decade of my career, I began writing, completing five novels and publishing four. Since 2019, I’ve been writing about the Armenians who settled in Troy in the late 19th century and who founded the church where I spent my childhood and early adulthood. Sadly, the church held its last regular service in 2011, and sat vacant and neglected for nine years. But my obsession — combined with the support of many interested members — led us to a final closure service in 2020 before a developer converted the church building to apartments. Most of my blog posts (JustWriteIt.live) have focused on what I’ve experienced on my way to a historical fiction about Troy’s early Armenians and the Evangelical Protestant church they built,” says Dawn.

“In retirement, I looked forward to making more traditional Armenian recipes, and one of my favorites, lahmajoun, was at the top of my list. My siblings and

I were raised in our church, and I was active in the Armenian Protestant Youth Fellowship (APYF) until my career took me elsewhere. My mother continued as a church member until she died in 1992. I recalled the delicious lahmajoun served at our church dinners as being the best I’ve ever tasted, and couldn’t wait to make it. The elder church ladies made them exclusively with lamb, and after trying commercial lahmajoun made with beef, I knew lamb was the only way to go.”

“My first attempt at making lahmajoun fell flat — the recipe in my cherished Rose Baboian *The Art of Armenian Cooking* (1971) cookbook didn’t really match my memory. I learned that the ladies of our church had their own recipe — in their heads — and most of them were no longer with us. Our church luncheons and dinners had ended decades ago. A friend and I collaborated on a series of experiments to match it. After testing various combinations of seasonings and spices through several batches, we hit on the right recipe, the recipe that I now use exclusively (below).”

Dawn adds, “That first aroma (and bite) of a fresh batch of this recipe never fails to bring me back to our old church kitchen and the hall where many of my memories were first formed. I don’t make this dough recipe from scratch too often due to my time constraints. I occasionally buy bread dough, but more often, I substitute soft white tortillas now — the thickest I can find. I make and freeze lahmajoun in batches of 4-6 dozen. This shortcut allows me to have an ever-present supply of lahmajoun ready to thaw on a few hours’ notice. Flour tortillas can always be used instead of making the dough from scratch, which makes it a lot easier on the preparation time.”

INGREDIENTS:

Meat mixture: combine together in a large mixing bowl:

- 1 pound lean ground (not fatty, but not too lean) beef, pork or lamb
- 1 cup finely chopped parsley
- 1 cup finely chopped mixture 3/4 red and 1/4 green bell pepper
- 2 large cloves garlic or 2 teaspoons minced garlic
- 3/4 teaspoon allspice plus 1/4 teaspoon cumin (Dawn uses more allspice than the recipe calls for - do it to your taste)
- 1/4 teaspoon black pepper
- 3/4 teaspoon Near East red pepper (or 1/2 teaspoon paprika mixed with 1/4 teaspoon cayenne)

1 1/2 to 2 cups canned diced or crushed tomatoes, drained

6 oz. can tomato paste

1 teaspoon salt (or to taste)

Optional: 1 teaspoon fresh mint leaves, finely chopped (or to taste)

Choice of sliced tomatoes, cucumbers, fresh herbs and lemon wedges as garnish

Dough:

Ingredients:

- 1 teaspoon yeast
- 3 tablespoons + 2/3 cup water
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon sugar
- 3 tablespoons melted shortening
- 2 1/2 - 2 1/3 cups all-purpose flour

PREPARATION:

Cover the combined meat mixture and let it marinate at least 6 hours or overnight in the refrigerator.

For the dough: Soften yeast in 3 tablespoons lukewarm water. Mix in the additional water as per chart. Add salt, sugar, and melted shortening (measure before melting). Blend in flour. Add a little more flour or water to make a stiff dough. Knead on lightly floured board until well blended and smooth.

Place dough in a greased pot. Grease the surface of the dough. Cover and let rise for 1 1/2 hours or until doubled in size. Set aside about 1 cup flour for cutting and opening the dough.

Cut dough and shape into balls the size of a small tangerine. Dip each ball in flour. Arrange 2 inches apart on a floured board or baking sheet. Cover with dry towel and top with wet towel. Let stand for 15 minutes.

Roll out each ball on floured surface into a circle 7-8 inches in diameter. Arrange on baking sheet. Spread with meat mixture (1/3 - 1/2 cup each).

Make sure to use your fingers and spread out the meat to a medium layer. Using your fingers helps the meat adhere to the dough well and you can also control the amount better versus using a spoon. You want the meat layer so thin that any thinner will leave bare dough. (Thick meat will fall off the tortilla/dough and bleed grease onto the baking sheet.)

Preheat oven to 450°F. Bake 1/2 to 1 inch above the bottom heat for 5 to 7 minutes to slightly brown the crust. Then place baking sheet to upper part of oven (about 4 inches from the top heat) and bake for 4 to 6 minutes or until the meat is light brown. Bake alternately in this manner (1 tray on the bottom and another on the top — be sure to brown on the bottom first.)

Serves 10-12.

This recipe was originally featured at the Armenian Museum of America website on July 21, 2020 at:

<https://www.armenianmuseum.org/armenian-recipes>

Author Dawn Essegian Lajeunesse

“My last three novels, *THE EYES HAVE IT*, *IN HER MOTHER’S SHOES* and *STAR CATCHING*, are available in e-book format through Amazon and other formats by request here or on my website. *AUTUMN COLORS* was my first novel and is still available through Amazon and B&N in multiple formats. My early writings are women’s fiction, one also suitable for YA. My work-in-progress is a historical fiction about the Armenians who settled in Troy, NY in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.”

Visit Dawn’s website: www.dawnlajeunesse.com



ARTS & CULTURE

CALENDAR

OF EVENTS & PROGRAMS

MASSACHUSETTS

MAY 21 — Celebrating the 65th anniversary of the ordination of Fr. Mampr Kouzouian, at a reception immediately following the Divine Liturgy, at the Charles and Nevart Talanian Cultural Hall of Holy Trinity Armenian Church, 145 Brattle St., Cambridge. Very Rev. Mesrop Parsamyan, Primate of the Eastern Diocese, to preside.

JUNE 4 — MEGHRI DERVARTANIAN, CHILDREN'S BOOK AUTHOR & ILLUSTRATOR. Armenian Heritage Park on The Greenway, Boston at 2pm shares the story of her recently published, «Դէպի Արարատ Լեռ» "Toward Mt. Ararat" (2022) Armenian Heritage Park on The Greenway, Boston. Interactive Program. Book Signing. Refreshments hosted by Eastern Lamejun Bakers. Announcement. For all ages. RSVP appreciated

JUNE 8 — UNDER THE STRAWBERRY MOON. Armenian Heritage Park on The Greenway, Boston at 8:15pm. Meet & Greet. Chocolate Dipped Strawberries hosted by Ovenbird Cafe. Featuring the Leon Janikian Ensemble. RSVP appreciated, hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org

JUNE 9 — 70th Annual Armenian Night at the Pops, Symphony Hall, Boston. Featuring violinist Eva Aronian and the Boston Pops Orchestra, in a performance of the Allegro Vivace movement from the violin concerto by Aram Khachaturian, marking the iconic composer's 120th anniversary of birth. The evening will feature A Symphonic Journey, a musical tour of Europe and Armenia, presented by the Boston Pops and Maestro Keith Lockhart, in collaboration with European travel authority and writer Rick Steves. Visit www.FACSBoston.org to select seats and purchase tickets. **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.

JUNE 11 — St. James Armenian Festival – Annual Picnic! Delicious Armenian food, Live Armenian music, children's activities with moon bounce, face

painting, and more! Rain or shine. Noon-5pm. St. James Armenian Church - 465 Mt. Auburn Street, Watertown MA. For more info visit www.stjameswatertown.org/festival or call 617.923.8860.

JUNE 11 — Mirak Chamber Music Series: Treasures of Armenian Classical Music, Organized by the Armenian Cultural Foundation and co-sponsored by Amaras Art Alliance. Naira Babayan, piano; Christina Gullans, cello. Works by Ghazarosian, Hovounts, Sayat Nova, Komitas, Baghdasarian, Harutyunyan. Sunday, at 4 p.m. Armenian Cultural Foundation, 441 Mystic Street, Arlington. (781) 646-3090. For tickets contact: amarasonline.com

JUNE 13 — Let's Party for the Park! InterContinental Hotel, Boston. Wine Tasting featuring the extraordinary Storica Wines: Wines from Armenia. Benefit for the Park's care during 2023. Advance Reservations required. For details and link to reserve, ArmenianHeritagePark.org/Support

JUNE 13 — LET'S PARTY FOR THE PARK! InterContinental Hotel, Boston, 6:30pm. Friends of Armenian Heritage Park's fabulous Wine Tasting Party featuring the extraordinary Storica Wines: Wines from Armenia Advance Reservations required. Benefit for the Park's Care during 2023. 21+ Party. For reservations, ArmenianHeritagePark.org/Support.

JUNE 21 — Tea & Tranquility. Armenian Heritage Park on The Greenway, Boston at 4 pm. Meet & Greet. Together at the Park. Marvel at the Abstract Sculpture. Tie a Ribbon on The Wishing Tree. Enjoy ice tea and luscious cookies. RSVP appreciated, hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org

JULY 2 — Armenian Church of Cape Cod - Kef Time Fourth of July weekend - Dinner & Dancing. Sunday, 6 to 11 p.m. at The Cape Club - 125 Falmouth Woods Road, North Falmouth Chicken Kebab & Losh Kebab dinner; music by Leon Janikian, Harry Bedrosian. ages 21 & over \$85; 16 to 20 \$50; 8 to 15 \$35; under 8 free Tickets on sale Eventbrite Kef-Time. For more information: Andrea Barber (617)201-9807.

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.

The Pleasures of Wonder: Mariam Petrosyan's *The Gray House*

BOOKS, from page 12

stigma of "such people" and are dismissed with euphemisms such as, "healthy people with scary stuff in their medical histories," or "children with diminished ability," Petrosyan makes even their grossest deformity irrelevant.

The Gray House is a wondrous place. It is a world full of amulets, spells and bad omens, a world of magic and phantasmagoric stories. "The passion of the House dwellers for tall tales of all kinds did not spring out of nothing. It was their way of coping, molding their grief into superstitions," writes Petrosyan. In fact, four times a year, the House organizes a Fairy Tale Night when kids share their own imagined stories. The children paint their faces and cover the walls and the ceilings of the locker rooms and the canteen with fanciful images, all in vivid colors. The two-headed lizard and the eagle-like monster on the coat of arms are part of who they are. Leaving the House would be a "step into the void."

This imagined world is far from being a perfect world, however. The more insightful among the children know that the House is not a thing apart. "The Outsides . . . contained the House in it." Indeed, the divisions and the fights among the leaders of the House reflect the wars and the massacres of the world outside. A game of chess is played as a battle between two armies. Playing dirty tricks and scaring and beating up the newbies is the seniors' favorite entertainment. The newbies are disciplined, chain-walked, and forced to eat, sleep, and pee on schedule, just as the grown-ups in the Outsides follow the Rules and Regulations of their own Script.

And then, of course, there is the Sepulcher, "a house within the House," where patients are kept, and where Death, "a small,

tender boy, with eyes occupying a good half of his face, and long dark-red hair that looked varnished . . . was a permanent resident."

Petrosyan's is a masterful parody of the care patients receive in "the godforsaken real world." Her critique of the inhumane treatment of the deranged and the disabled, in "the empty and hostile city that lived its own life," cannot be missed. "They pump you full of drugs and pack you off in a straitjacket," she writes. In the words of one youngster, "There is no trace of humanity in the Sepulcher . . . The human floats somewhere outside of the boundaries of the patient, waiting patiently for the possibility of a resurrection."

Despite the obvious overlaps, however, the Game played in the Gray House is not the same evil drama as the one played in the Outsides. No matter what their abnormality, the kids in the House are neither pitied, nor shunned and excluded. Spells and amulets work (even if not all of the time) and magic caters to their fears and their wishes. The Great Power makes the armless little boy we encounter at the beginning of the book, "whole" with arms. Whether these are prosthetic or metaphoric arms does not even matter. Indeed, the armless boy wonders if arms are something that everyone needs: "I could choose to have them or not have them," he tells his friend Ancient, the smartest guy in the House.

Under the guise of a fantastical tale, Petrosyan makes us ponder the inner workings of human nature and the societies in which we live. While she is entertaining us with the particularities of her imagined world, she is also implicitly interrogating: "Why do we oppress and tyrannize?" "Where does this angst come from?" "Sepulcher: Outside or Inside Us." These questions are left unanswered. Receiving the

answers would be even more frightening. Smoker understands that there is "not a word of truth" in the promotional booklet that advertises the House as a Home, "but also not a word that was a direct lie." Things remain enigmatic.

Maybe there is no perfect version of life. The craziness is all around. Yet, by confronting the disabilities of these children, Petrosyan creates the possibility of a viable life for them. We embrace the girl with "eyes too big for a small triangular space," the kids with "big heads full of teeth," and Humpback, who "laughed with only half of his face." In the final chapter, the Happy Boy wakes up with this wondrous feeling: "I'm feeling kinda strange. Kinda liking everything, very much, so much I want to cry." The joy overflowing inside the boy fills him with "an unexpected and unfamiliar delight . . . Nothing much would be able to offend him anymore."

What ultimately emerges is Petrosyan's empathy for her fellow human beings, good and bad. At the end of the book, Sphinx brings another "crazy kid" to the House, "a little changeling" he wanted "to learn to love this world. Even a little. As much as I could teach him to." The narrator of this particular event cannot decide which of the two he pities more. "Sphinx, I guess. He has a history of attempting the impossible. And it doesn't always work out in the end for him, not by a long shot," he muses. *The Gray House* remains a world of contradictions.

Petrosyan's imagined world enlightens and opens into spirituality. The references to the ancient Chinese Taoist philosopher Lao Tzu and the need for "introspection," "spiritual cleansing" and "deeper self-awareness," indicate how far we have traveled from "the spirit of true Tao." Indeed, Sphinx reckons that the Sepulcher is

a place where the spirit goes to be buried . . . and there is nothing worse for a spirit than to be reduced to a mere body."

I would like to add that, while totally engrossing, the 721-page book can also be overwhelming. At times, identifying the narrators of the different events, and having to flip back and forth to check the names of the characters whose nicknames change as they are transferred from one group to another, feels like solving a "puzzle." However, nothing takes away from the book's brilliance. When "the boy shuffling a little behind, the woman bent under the weight of the suitcase" were brought up on the last page of the book, I turned to the beginning to check out the scene, and ended up reading a whole chapter. Fantasy fiction has never been my genre, yet letting go of this bizarre reality has been impossible. Petrosyan must have cast a spell on me, too.

The Gray House was published in its original Russian in 2009 and became an instant bestseller, winning several top literary awards, including the Russian Prize for the best book in Russian by an author living abroad. Yuri Machkasov's translation from the original Russian into English is a feat worthy of its own awards. Machkasov's prose is rich and lyrical. "Humpback played his flute, and the backyard listened. He was playing very softly, for himself only. The wind whirled the leaves in circles. Then they were caught in the puddles and stopped. Their dance ended. They ended. Now they would turn to mush and dirt. Just like people," gives no hint that this is a text originally written in another language.

Most surprising to me, however, is the fact that there is as yet no Armenian translation of this extraordinary book authored by the great-granddaughter of the Armenian painter Martiros Saryan. Mariam Petrosyan lives in Yerevan, Armenia.

COMMENTARY

THE ARMENIAN
**MIRROR
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SINCE 1932



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What Happened in Brussels?

By Benjamin Poghosyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

On May 14, 2023, Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev met in Brussels. The meeting was facilitated by President of the European Council Charles Michel, who also had separate discussions with Pashinyan and Aliyev. The May 14 summit marked the resumption of the Brussels format, a European Union platform for Armenia – Azerbaijan negotiations created in December 2021. The last meeting in the Brussels format took place on August 31, 2022. It was followed by large-scale Azerbaijani aggression against Armenia on September 13-14 and by negotiations, which took place in Prague on October 6, 2022, facilitated by Michel and French President Emmanuel Macron. After Prague, the Brussels format was in limbo, as Armenia allegedly demanded to include Macron in the negotiations, which Azerbaijan vehemently rejected. After the Prague meeting, the US significantly increased its involvement in the negotiation process. Americans organized a Pashinyan – Aliyev meeting in February 2023 in Munich, and then after intensive shuttle diplomacy, brought the Armenian and Azerbaijani foreign ministers to Washington for a 4-day negotiation marathon in early May 2023.

Meanwhile, as Armenia and Azerbaijan were bickering over formats and platforms, Armenia, by signing the Prague declaration on October 6 and recognizing the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan within the Alma-Ata declaration of 1991, agreed that Nagorno Karabakh is part of Azerbaijan. This narrative was first articulated by Prime Minister Pashinyan in April 2022, when he argued that Armenia should lower the bar of the status of Nagorno Karabakh to secure the support of the international community.

It was a sign that Armenia dropped its long-term vision that Nagorno Karabakh could not be part of Azerbaijan and agreed to discuss the autonomous status of Karabakh within Azerbaijan. However, since the summer of 2022, Armenian authorities have stopped using the terms “status” and “the right of self-determination,” and instead have been pushing forward the narrative of the necessity to secure the rights of Armenians living in Nagorno Karabakh. Simultaneously, Armenia called for an international presence in Nagorno Karabakh and an international mechanism for Karabakh – Azerbaijan negotiations. The Prague statement of October 6, 2022 solidified this vision. Meanwhile, on December 12, 2022, Azerbaijan closed the Lachin corridor through the actions of self-described “eco-activists.” The blockade of Nagorno Karabakh added an additional layer to the negotiations, as Armenia called on Russia and the international community to pressure Azerbaijan to open the Lachin corridor. Simultaneously, the Armenian government stated that Armenia would not negotiate with Azerbaijan on the Lachin corridor issue. Armenia sought to use also international legal mechanisms to force Azerbaijan to end the blockade. Yerevan applied to the International Court of Justice (ICJ), and the court, in its decision of February 22, 2023, called Azerbaijan to use all measures to allow free movement via the corridor. However, on April 23, Azerbaijan established a checkpoint on the Lachin corridor, thus finalizing its complete control.

Thus, as Azerbaijan took steps to strengthen its control over the Lachin corridor, rejected the implementation of the ICJ decision, and worsened the humanitarian crisis in Nagorno Karabakh, Armenia agreed to resume negotiations with Azerbaijan first in Munich, then in Washington

and Brussels. On May 19, the Armenian and Azerbaijani foreign ministers will meet in Moscow, and leaders of the two countries will have another discussion on June 1, 2023, in Chisinau with the participation of Michel, Macron, and German Chancellor Scholz.

After the May 14 meeting, Charles Michel made some public remarks. He emphasized that the leaders confirmed their unequivocal commitment to the 1991 Alma-Ata Declaration and the respective territorial integrity of Armenia (29,800 km²) and Azerbaijan (86,600 km²). According to him, they continued exchanges on the issue of the rights and security of Armenians living in the former Nagorno Karabakh Autonomous Oblast. Michel stated that he encouraged Azerbaijan to develop a positive agenda to guarantee this population’s rights and security in close cooperation with the international community and raised the need for a transparent and constructive dialogue between Baku and this population.

There are several interesting features in these remarks. First, there was nothing about the situation along the Lachin corridor, noncompliance of Azerbaijan with the ICJ decision, the establishment of an Azerbaijani checkpoint, and the deepening humanitarian crisis. The absence of any reference to the situation in and around the corridor is very worrisome, as it meant that the EU accepted the Azerbaijani version of the situation that there was no blockade, and that establishment of the checkpoint was in line with international law. Unfortunately, Armenia did not object to this perception.

Another interesting part is the reference to the area of Armenia and Azerbaijan. After the Prague statement, there was speculation in and outside Armenia that recognition of Azerbaijan’s territorial integrity within the Alma-Ata declaration has nothing to do with Nagorno Karabakh, as Nagorno Karabakh, entirely in line with Soviet Union laws, declared its independence on September 2, 1991, and organized an independence referendum on December 10, before the signature of the Alma-Ata declaration on December 21. Thus, even after October 6, 2022, there was room for maneuvering for the Armenian authorities. However, the reference to Azerbaijan’s 86,600 km² territory is an unequivocal message that Armenia recognizes the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan including Nagorno Karabakh. The last prominent feature of the statement was the notion that even though the Armenian government was daily repeating the necessity to have an international presence in Nagorno Karabakh and to establish an international mechanism for Azerbaijan – Nagorno Karabakh negotiations, there was no reference to any of these ideas.

Thus, the May 14 Brussels summit brought the sides closer to signing a peace agreement that will recognize Nagorno Karabakh as part of Azerbaijan with no status and no explicit guarantees for the rights and security of the Armenian population. However, according to the recent International Republican Institute (IRI) poll, 70 percent of the population of Armenia does not support the government’s policy on Nagorno Karabakh, and so the Armenian authorities may avoid the signature of the agreement in the near future. In contrast with the November 10, 2020 statement, any agreement signed by the prime minister must be confirmed by the Constitutional Court and ratified by the parliament. This procedure can be another factor delaying the process.

(Benjamin Poghosyan is chairman of the Center for Political and Economic Strategic Studies in Yerevan, and Senior Research Fellow at the Applied Policy Research Institute (APRI) of Armenia.)

A Way to Curb the Anti-Armenian Politics of Aliyev

By Dr. Vahagn Vardanyan

Out of 193 United Nations member-states, only a few are members of one or another military-political alliance (for example, NATO or the Russia-led Collective Security Treaty Organization). In the 1960s, many countries which decided not to join any such alliance formed the Non-Aligned Movement (then mainly directed against NATO and the Warsaw Pact). After the USSR and the Warsaw Pact Organization ceased, the Movement continued to exist and today, 120 countries are members. Seven more (including Armenia) have observer status. The Movement’s governance principles are defined by the Cartagena Methodological Document adopted in 1996. To join the Movement, a country must accept and adhere to the requirements in Paragraph 3 of the

above document, known as the “Ten Bandung Principles.”

The highest governing body of the Non-Aligned Movement is the Summit of heads of states or governments of member states. At the Summit, one of the leaders of the member-states is elected as the president of the Movement before the next Summit is held. Azerbaijan is a member of the movement, and currently, its leader Ilham Aliyev is its president from 2019 until 2023 (extended in 2022 because of the global situation with COVID-19). Now let’s look at the ten foundational principles of the Movement and the cases of violation of each of these principles by Aliyev’s Azerbaijan.

Principle I: Respect for fundamental human rights and the purposes and the principles of the Charter of the United Nations

Violation of the principle: There are many facts about the
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COMMENTARY

MY TURN



by Harut Sassounian

Another Turkish Attempt to Attack Biden For Recognizing the Armenian Genocide

When Turkey and its denialist supporters lose a battle to block the recognition of the Armenian Genocide, they resort to ridiculous attacks such as announcing their desire to impeach President Biden after he is no longer in office, a laughable notion which I disclosed in my earlier article.

In another equally hopeless Turkish attempt to counter the recognition of the Armenian Genocide, Attorney Bruce Fein, Counsel for Turkish Anti-Defamation Alliance, sent a lengthy letter to members of Congress on April 24, 2023, complaining about the statement President Biden had issued earlier that day.

Fein is president of the law firm Bruce Fein & Associates in Washington, D.C. Over the years, he has worn many hats to support Turkey's campaign against the recognition of the Armenian Genocide. He has been Resident Scholar for the Turkish Coalition of America, Resident Scholar at the Assembly of Turkish American Associations, columnist for the Turkish Times newspaper, consultant to the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, commentator on Turkish television, and Counsel for Turkish Anti-Defamation Alliance.

Before I delve into the content of Fein's letter, I would like to ask two basic questions:

1) Why did Fein complain about President Biden only after he recognized the Armenian Genocide on April 24? Shouldn't he have written his letter before the President issued his statement? I don't know if Fein got paid for his letter as Counsel for Turkish Anti-Defamation Alliance. If he did, the Turkish Alliance wasted its money.

2) Why did Fein write to Members of Congress and not to President Biden directly to complain about his April 24 statement? Fein's letter is more than three years too late. The House of Representatives recognized the Armenian Genocide on October 29, 2019 by a vote of 405 to 11, and the Senate recognized it on December 12, 2019 in a unanimous vote. President Biden issued his first statement recognizing the Armenian Genocide on April 24, 2021. Where has Fein been since 2019 and 2021?

Turning to the content of Fein's questionable letter, he shamelessly wrote that "Mr. Biden's statement was bought and paid for by the Armenian National Committee of America (ANCA)." Since Fein provided not a shred of evidence in his defamatory letter, the ANCA has the right to sue Fein for libel. The ANCA did not even endorse Biden for President. Nevertheless, Fein went

on: "But in politics, truth is helpless when assaulted by lavish campaign contributions and votes.... The Armenian genocide lie persists because of the rich backing of ANCA and their bought political toadies. It is contemptible that President Biden has stooped so low."

Fein then goes on to make a number of false statements regarding the European Court of Human Rights, the United Nations, and several scholars, such as the controversial Prof. Bernard Lewis of Princeton University who had made conflicting statements on the Armenian Genocide. He was a recipient of the Atatürk International Peace Prize. The ANCA called him "an academic mercenary."

Here is what Wikipedia reveals about Lewis:

"The first two editions of Lewis's *The Emergence of Modern Turkey* (1961 and 1968) describe the Armenian genocide as 'the terrible holocaust of 1915, when a million and a half Armenians perished.' In later editions, this text is altered to 'the terrible slaughter of 1915, when, according to estimates, more than a million Armenians perished, as well as an unknown number of Turks.' ...The change in Lewis's textual description of the Armenian genocide and his signing of the petition against the Congressional resolution was controversial among some Armenian historians as well as journalists, who suggested that Lewis was engaging in historical negationism to serve his own political and personal interests.... In a 1995 civil proceeding brought by three Armenian genocide survivors, a French court censured Lewis' remarks under Article 1382 of the Civil Code and fined him one franc, and ordering the publication of the judgment at Lewis' cost in *Le Monde*. The court ruled that while Lewis has the right to his views, their expression harmed a third party and that 'it is only by hiding elements which go against his thesis that the defendant was able to state there was no 'serious proof' of the Armenian Genocide.'"

There are many other claims by Fein in his letter such as: "the Genocide Convention excludes politically motivated killings." Thus, Fein admits that Armenians were indeed massacred, but for political reasons!

By claiming that no court verdict has been issued regarding the Armenian Genocide, Fein must have forgotten about the death sentences issued by the Turkish Military Tribunal in Istanbul in 1919 against the masterminds of the Armenian Genocide.

Fein also distorted the exile of Ottoman leaders to Malta by the British in 1919 in order to try them for their crimes. Great Britain released the 144 Turks in exchange for 22 British prisoners, stating that one British prisoner is worth a shipload of Turks.

Finally, Fein's 'brilliant mind' can be demonstrated by referring to his ridiculous article published on November 25, 2022, in *The Hill*, suggesting that Congress "can end the war in Ukraine ... by enacting a statute withdrawing the United States from NATO"!

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inhumane treatment of prisoners of war and captured civilians. Such are, for example, the shooting of two captured Armenian residents in the town of Hadrut in Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh) during the 44-day War of 2020 and the fact that it remained without consequences. The opening of a war park in Azerbaijan's capital city of Baku, which demonstrates the humiliation of the Armenian side, is among many other facts raised by the Republic of Armenia's Human Rights Defender's Office.

Principle II: Respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all nations

Violation of the principle: Threats and claims to the sovereign territory of the Republic of Armenia (Syunik, Lake Sevan, the capital city of Yerevan) by Aliyev himself and representatives of Azerbaijan's other state bodies.

Principle III: Recognition of the equality of all races and the equality of all nations, large and small

Violation of the principle: The right to self-determination of the people of the Republic of Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh) was implemented through the referendum held on December 10, 1991. However, at that time, Azerbaijan did not fulfill its obligation, that is, to observe the results of the referendum under the acting law of that time. The Republic of Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh) undertook all the actions to achieve independence from the Soviet Union (not just Azerbaijan), as the current legislation prescribed. Even though Artsakh's independence has not yet been recognized by any member state of the United Nations (except for the resolutions of the two houses of the French Parliament), since the implementation of self-determination, not only has Azerbaijan not discussed steps to recognize the independence of Artsakh, but, on the contrary, Azerbaijan has consistently aborted the status of Artsakh, that is, the recognition of the Artsakh independence movement.

Principle IV: Abstention from intervention or interference in the internal affairs of another country

Violation of the principle: For years, Azerbaijan has consistently restricted the entry of citizens of the Republic of Armenia, as well as Armenians who are citizens of other states, into Azerbaijan. With such a step, that country violates its commitment to maintaining the equality of nations and countries.

Principle V: Respect for the right of each nation to defend itself singly or collectively, in conformity with the

Charter of the United Nations

Violation of the principle: The invasion of Azerbaijan into the internationally recognized borders of the Republic of Armenia (in particular, on May 12, 2021, September 13-14, 2022) and its carrying out operations on the territory of Armenia, including military-technical works, is an interference in the normal life of the territorial units of Armenia and the entire country. Such operations, in addition to security threats, also entail socio-economic constraints for the local population.

Principle VI: Abstention from the use of arrangements of collective defense to serve the particular interests of any of the big powers, abstention by any country from exerting pressures on other countries

Violation of the principle: The struggle by the Republic of Armenia against the existence of the army, the most critical structure that ensures its security, up to the point of abolishing the armed forces or imposing restrictions on them, is nothing but an encroachment on Armenia's right to defend itself as a member state of the United Nations.

Principle VII: Refraining from acts or threats of aggression or the use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any country

Violation of the principle: Many threats have been made against Armenia by Aliyev himself and his administration. They related to the political independence of Armenia: for example, the claim that Armenians cannot have an independent state and must be part of another big state. Threats were also made against such a structure of strategic significance in the territory of Armenia, such as the Metsamor nuclear power plant. Such statements represent a passive nuclear attack, that is, a threat to use a means of mass extermination.

Principle VIII: Settlement of all international disputes by peaceful means, such as negotiation, conciliation, arbitration, or judicial settlement, as well as other peaceful means of the parties' own choice, in conformity with the Charter of the United Nations

Violation of the principle: From 1992 to September 27, 2020, Azerbaijan, together with the parties and mediators involved in the Artsakh issue (in particular, Armenia, as the guarantor of Artsakh's security, co-chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group authorized by the United Nations, Russia, the USA, and France), has consistently confirmed the intolerance toward a military solution to the conflict. In other words, everyone has always accepted that a peace-

ful settlement is the only acceptable solution to the problem. The consistent emphasis of this principle (approach), which followed every negotiation discussion, made the party initiating military actions legally responsible for violating the format of the problem-solving process. By unleashing a war against Artsakh on September 27, 2020, Azerbaijan became accountable for violating the path of a peaceful settlement. Since the achieved independence of the Republic of Artsakh (December 1991), the relations between the Republic of Artsakh and the Republic of Azerbaijan should be considered international. In addition, as already mentioned, Azerbaijan has not only violated its obligation to peacefully resolve disputes relating to the Artsakh issue. Still, it has also undertaken a military invasion of the territory of Armenia.

Principle IX: Promotion of mutual interests and cooperation

Violation of the principle: Azerbaijan has been consistently implementing the economic blockade of Armenia for three decades. As a result of the latter, the infrastructures of Armenia have been isolated from a significant part of the regional system. Such targeting of another country is evidence of a deliberate failure to cooperate.

Principle X: Respect for justice and international obligation

Violation of the principle: According to Ilham Aliyev's decree, Azerbaijan has violated the assumed international obligations and encroached on justice. One vivid example was Aliyev's pardoning of Azerbaijani citizen Ramil Safarov, who was sentenced to life imprisonment in Hungary for assassinating an Armenian citizen (Gurgen Margaryan) during a NATO partnership training visit. Hungary later extradited Safarov to Azerbaijan (on August 31, 2012), and, despite Azerbaijan's obligation to keep him imprisoned, freeing R. Safarov violated the assumed obligations.

The above-mentioned cases of violations of the Non-Aligned Movement's foundation principles by its member-state (and current chair) of Azerbaijan allow Armenia to apply to members of the Movement by raising the facts of these violations. Having Azerbaijan's leader Aliyev removed from the position of the head of the Movement is an essential step toward curbing his anti-Armenian politics.

(An Armenian-language version of this article was published by the author, a resident of Hong Kong, in *Aravod* newspaper of Yerevan in 2021.)



COMMENTARY

Jirair Libaridian in Interview

Apportions Blame for Karabakh Catastrophe

You have just published in Armenia and in Armenian the second voluminous opus of your five volumes devoted to your thoughts on the challenges and contemporary issues that Armenia has been going through since 1991. Your detractors believe that you are conducting an enterprise of justification. What is your purpose and why such an enterprise? Why would I need to justify myself? My analyses and projections proved to be right. If those detractors had followed the policies I supported when they were in power, we would have been in a different place at this time. In fact, it is my detractors who need to justify their past policies of extremism and maximalism that led to war and to the narrowing of our options and leverages.

Besides, I don't know why I should take such detractors seriously. Instead of engaging with the argument and reasoning I articulate, they talk about my motivation for publishing these books. Does the motivation decrease the value of an argument, of an analysis? Isn't it possible that what I write is valid although I may have the wrong reason to publish it?

I have no problem with critics who disagree and argue their point with evidence. I do pity detractors who cannot handle the truth and resort to weird tactics to discredit my approach without being able to negate it. Would you believe that a few years back someone thought he could have people disregard my analysis by writing that my father was a cook; he thought that was a good reason why I could not possibly be right. And that was written at a time when I had a doctorate from one of the most respected universities in the US, and had already earned the title of university professor. Interestingly, that article where that "secret" was published was in the *Asbarez* newspaper, for which I was considered qualified enough to be its editor some 20 years earlier.

Now, for the purpose of publishing these books. Why do people publish? Does a scholar, a former diplomat need to explain?

As I have explained in the prefaces of my new series of books, these books bring together some of the most important pieces I have authored, interviews I have given, and their totality will present my thinking about our history, society, policies and challenges. Some of my thoughts, analyses, and approaches had appeared piecemeal at different times and in different places and I thought bringing them together would offer the readers a fuller and more complete sense of my position. Let's also not forget that I have written both in English and Armenian and Armenian readers are, my English language pieces are not accessible to most Armenians and vice versa for English language readers with regard to my Armenian material.

Finally, I should add that I get many requests, especially from younger people and particularly since the 2020 war, for this or that article, or a number of articles I have published over time. These volumes solve that problem too by making some of my key writings to anyone who is interested.

I also think that my position represents a segment of the spectrum of the Armenian political spectrum and they contribute to what could be a healthy public debate.

In these 36 sections grouped in six parts devoted to Armenia and the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, you draw up an implacable and severe indictment of the errors of the Armenian leaders on the question of Armenian-Turkish relations and the management of the Artsakh question. At the same time, you dedicate your book to Levon Ter Petrossian for whom you worked for 7 years. What criticism could you make of his record?

I think he made mistakes as far as some of his appointments are concerned. He also trusted some of his colleagues more than he should have. Some in his administration took away from his political capital instead of adding to it.

As far as his policies are concerned, I think he was a visionary realist. Otherwise, I would not have been able to work with him, and work so closely, for seven years, and to continue a healthy dialog during all these years since.

It important to note, that since he left the presidency Ter-Petrossian has been the subject of an organized and

sustained campaign to malign him and to deny him the credits he deserves, beginning with some taking credit for the victory of the first war. I think future historians will regard him as one of the most important leaders in our people's long journey. I do.

Let me remind you also of a significant fact that I have mentioned in my dedication: Levon Ter-Petrossian is the only leader in all of the history of Armenia who was elected directly by the people. Don't you think that such a leader should be recognized?

It seems that Armenian political thought has split into two: political sovereignty centered on the idea of the state, of independence on the one hand; and territorial sovereignty defended by Haytadism [Hay Tad = the Armenian Cause], centered on the control of historically Armenian territories but under Russian protection. Do you consider this dichotomy relevant? Why do you think this dichotomy is relevant? I am not sure what you mean by territorial sovereignty for historic western Armenia under Russian protection. But let me assume that you mean unification of historic western Armenia with the Republic of Armenia and the whole unified Armenia as part of Russia in some form or another. And this goal, in your formulation, stands in contrast to the first group's focus on the current republic, on its people, and the defense of its independence.

The dichotomy, as you call it, is of the essence. Each implies an agenda and a strategy. The first school of thought wants to resolve existing, essential, real problems for a real piece of land and very real people. The second school of thought says it is pursuing a vision for which it has no strategy except for assigning Russia interests and goals which it does not have, a vision where people are abstracted, a vision where the current homeland can be sacrificed for some "higher ideal" or "national vision." Or Haytadism.

Now, let's see if Haytadism survives the simple test of common sense.

The ARF [Armenian Revolutionary Federation], the foremost champion of Haytadism, opposed independence in 1990 and 1991, with the argument that should Armenia become independent, it would lose the protection of Russia and Turkey would invade Armenia and complete the work of the Genocide. So, fear of Turkey was the primary problem to be resolved and even independence should be sacrificed to that concern.

Yet, at the same time, the ARF has followed a policy of demands from Turkey, including the most problematic one as far as Turkey is concerned – territorial demands. How does that make sense? I know that it makes us feel good to imagine territorial reparations and imagine a unified Armenia. We are a traumatized people, and we want to see justice done. And yet, the ARF is doing everything to provoke Turkey, even when, from a real political point of view, such demands seem quite irrational when (a) we know that it will not happen and, (b) it harms what we have left.

Can you give a concrete example?

Certainly. Let me tell you a true story, which I may have told before in another context but which deserves to be told again.

Sometime in late 1993 or early 1994, the chairman of the Standing Committee on State Building of the parliament at the time, Edik Yegoryan, now deceased, called President Ter-Petrossian to inform him that a member of his committee, Mekhak Gabrielyan, was proposing to offer the draft of a new bill to the Committee. The purpose of the draft bill was to declare null and void the 1921 Treaty of Kars, the treaty that delineated the border between Turkey and Armenia. That border that has remained unchanged since 1921, and as inheritor state of the USSR, Armenia had recognized that document along with all other international obligations.

Mekhak Gabrielyan, a soft-spoken, gentle deputy and a member of the ARF in the parliament, expected the Committee to begin public hearings on the draft bill, after which he hoped the bill would be submitted to a vote of the full parliament.

The president asked me to meet with the Committee; and I asked Yegoryan to first arrange for an informal

meeting of the Committee on a Saturday which I would attend.

When the Committee met, the Chairman asked Mr. Gabrielyan to make his case for the bill he wanted to propose. Mr. Gabrielyan began with an introduction of Armenian history and grievances. The introduction was so long that after twenty minutes I think he had only reached the 5th century Vartanants Battle in his narrative.

I used a moment when the speaker needed to catch his breath to intervene. I told Mr. Gabrielyan that I was ready to be with the Committee all day but that also I was familiar with Armenian history, and it would help if we clarified a couple of points first.

I asked him if, in fact, it was his intention to offer a bill aimed at nullifying the Treaty of Kars. After Gabrielyan confirmed that such was his intention, I asked him what problem was he solving by seeing the Kars Treaty nullified. He was not sure what I meant, so I helped him.

I represent the administration, I said, and I can tell you the problems we are currently trying to resolve: winning a war, avoiding other foreign entanglements, keeping inflation down and making economic reforms work, finding ways to support a social safety net, and the like. "What problem are you trying to resolve with your proposal?", I asked.

As Gabrielyan started mulling over my question, I added: Is it possible that whatever problem or problems you are trying to resolve, your solution may create more serious problems than the one you are trying to resolve with your proposed bill?

Gabrielyan asked what I meant, which I was happy to disclose: The Treaty of Kars signaled an agreement between Turkey and Armenia (and three other states) regarding the border between the two states, I explained. If one side, Armenia in this case, says that it no longer recognizes that border without having a new agreement in place, the other side, Turkey, has no obligation to honor that treaty or respect that border. There would be no border to violate. What were the chances, I asked the deputy, that our tanks would reach Van, before Turkish tanks reach Yerevan?

The chairman waited a minute and then asked him: Do you still think you will want to introduce that draft proposal? Mr. Gabrielyan scratched his head and said: "This is a more serious issue than I thought." Gabrielyan did not introduce his bill.

That is a true story and a simple exchange that summarizes the conflict and the difference between the two sides. It is the conflict between these two positions that explains much of what has happened in the last 30 years, at least; it shows how to assess policies, and what we should consider a success and what a failure. That is, when we have a system of accountability for political position and for policies.

As I said, visions and dreams are fine, but not if in pursuing them you destroy what you have. During the public presentation of this book in Yerevan last December, I put it this way: we seem to be caught between the past made of trauma and the future, made of illusions. When are our people going to live in the present? Don't the people of Armenia deserve to live in the present, in their present, with dignity and in peace? Must every generation of young men be sacrificed to the gods of nationalism, heroism, super patriotism and with total disregard for simple truths? And with what results?

Your friend the geo-strategist Gérard Chaliand claims that not all states have the means to be independent. Your political struggle seems to have been directed towards the imperative of Armenia's national independence. You repeat it tirelessly in your book. Do you think that Armenia has the levers to be really independent in the geopolitical situation that it is in?

I would agree with my friend and express the same assessment in a different way.

All independence is relative and characterized by uncertainty and fluidity; the core question is: to what extent does a state itself define its vital interests and choose the means to defend them.

In this sense, Armenia does have the capability to define its interests but in the last couple of decades it has failed to do so adequately. The result has been that its ability to defend its interests has diminished.

When we think about the degree and quality of independence of a small country, we automatically think of external forces that would threaten that independence. And that is true to different extents. I have argued that domestic factors too matter on whether those running the small state have adopted and implemented policies that maximize the chances of the state to be independent in the way I described above.

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COMMENTARY

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This is not a new problem; it goes back to fifth-century Armenia, when the country lost its status as an independent kingdom. I would advise all Armenians to read Movses Khorenatsi, at least its last few pages, the famous “Ողբ” [Lament]. There the historian explains the reasons for the loss of that kingdom, that is, its sovereignty. None of the reasons he offers relate to external threats and bad neighbors. He lists a number of reasons all related to the behavior of Armenia’s elites: princes, clergymen, judges and generals.

We stop dealing with real politics when we separate foreign threats from our own behavior.

You underline a form of political irresponsibility on the part of the Armenian elites in Armenia and in the diaspora who are still impregnated with the national ideology, with reference to the Treaty of Sevres, to the Wilsonian Armenia. Why do you think political Haytadism is a failure?

Very simply because Haytadism ignores the real issues and real options to resolve them. Instead of facing the very difficult realities and choices, Haytadism offers good feelings and nice dreams that carry no responsibility with them.

Asking for what is impossible, feeling good about being right, having justice on your side, and pursuing the right cause is not a recipe that makes you a functioning political force or state. I don’t know when was the last time justice and law and fairness determined the outcome of conflicts. Just about every treaty or law one can mention is exactly the reason why we never got anywhere. Now evoking them expecting to achieve a goal?

Has anyone evoking the Treaty of Sevres offered any strategy on how to revive it? There were reasons why its signatory powers left it for dead and went to Lausanne. Have those reasons disappeared? Has any of those countries or any of our best friends, including Russia, given any reason for us to believe that they might reverse their long-standing interests and strategies in order to use their resources to implement a treaty everyone else — except for Turkey — forgotten?

Such campaigns are not only fruitless; they are also harmful.

You write that the paradigm of fear enslaves political thought in a straitjacket – fear of genocidal Pan-Turkism.

Unfortunately, instead of measuring actual threats, Haytadism offers a generic fear that makes it almost impossible to discern real threats butw it helps push Armenia and Armenians toward dependence and

For years Haytadists were screaming about the threat of Pan-Turkism, and the certainty of a new genocide; while a few of us were warning about a clear and present danger from Azerbaijan because of the real conflict on Karabakh and the unwillingness of the Armenian side to assess properly the situation and the threat.

Well, Turkey did not attack, but Azerbaijan did and we all know what we lost. That is the cost of ideologically driven extremist positions.

For what do you reproach the leaders of the ARF since the defeat of the 44-day war? For not being in touch with reality and for not taking responsibility?

At this moment in time, I am not sure it will make any difference to reproach anyone, whether the ARF or any other political group. If a political group or leader refuses to draw the appropriate conclusions from the disastrous and fateful 2020 war, then there is something that is fundamentally wrong with them.

The ARF and others like it pursued policies that led to war and defeat. One could feel generous and say that in politics being wrong happens. It happens that a political party or parties adopt and follow a policy that leads to disastrous conclusions. One can say that, even if it was obvious that these policies were going to lead to irrecoverable losses and they were warned many times about such losses.

But to continue the same policies, to continue with the same false assumptions and logic, after the war and the losses is simply incomprehensible. The only explanation is that they are *not* dealing with normal politics, normal in the sense that parties are there to identify and solve problems in order to keep the people and the state safe and secure. Such parties and leaders seem to have little to do with realities and rational decision making.

Do you think that the leaders of Artsakh, who according to you bear a heavy responsibility for the disastrous fate of their region, have absorbed the lessons of the defeat?

It is painful to say this, but the leaders of Artsakh in the last 30 years — and others who supported them in their unrealistic and maximalist policies — have a major share of the responsibility in the disaster to which these policies led. Supported by political forces in Armenia and so many in the Diaspora, they obstructed reasonable and achievable solutions that would have secured Artsakh’s vital interests without necessarily giving up possibilities in the future.

It is even more painful to observe that the Artsakh leadership too has failed to learn the right lesson from the war. Their choices are far less now; they have lost Armenia as a guarantor of their security, they have their best hope, Russia, unable and/or unwilling to provide them with the necessary security. But they do not seem to have drawn the conclusions one would expect them to draw. **Today a young generation of Armenian diplomats and political leaders is engaged in a process of normalization with Turkey. You were the first to open the way to dialogue. However, could one say that the current context seems more unfavorable to Armenia? In other words, how to talk with Turkey and how to manage to dissociate the question of Artsakh from that of the normalization of Armenian-Turkish bilateral relations?**

Normalization for me, above all, is the creation of conditions that will decrease any threat or perception of threat Armenia senses from Turkey.

It does not seem to me that Turkey will delink the issue of bilateral relations with Armenia from that of Armenia’s relations with Azerbaijan. Ankara may undertake some minor steps and offer symbolic gestures, but for the time being I see no reason why it should. Relations with Armenian do have some significance for Turkey; but not more than its relations with Azerbaijan. Relations between Ankara and Baku have many more dimensions than the ethnic affinity that exists between them.

(The above interview is an English translation of the French-language text published in Paris in March 2023.)

Elegy for Aris Sevag: Editor and Translator of the Armenian People

By Aida Zilelian

It seems impossible to memorialize the life of a prolific translator a decade after his passing. Especially if you knew him for much of your life. I looked at my calendar today and it marks eleven years this May since Aris Sevag died. I don’t reflect on how much time has gone by. For me, his death stands still. It was only after his passing that I was able to understand who he truly was, beyond his life’s work and his care and love for me as my stepfather.

For the Armenian community, Aris was a treasure. He edited and translated hundreds of literary works from Armenian to English interchangeably, bringing to life excerpts, articles, books, and memoirs of Armenians who would have long been forgotten had it not been for his voracious — compulsive, really — desire to extract the meaning of words in its purest divination. I recently discovered that a collection of short stories, seven of which he had translated, *Armenian-American Sketches* by Bedros Keljik was selected as the winner of the 2020 Dr. Sona Aronian Book Prizes for Excellence in Armenian Studies. Aris’ bibliography could fill volumes. One of his most notable masterpieces was his translation of *Armenian Golgotha* (2010, Knopf), a 500-page memoir by the priest Grigoris Balakian, who was arrested and deported during the Armenian Genocide, where he bore witness to the annihilation of his people.

Aris told me once, “To say this is devastating to read.... It can take years off your life.”

He recounted the stories of his father, a professor of Physics, Dr. Manasseh Sevag, who was a Genocide survivor and a professor at the University of Pennsylvania.

The only way to truly understand his dedication to his craft, his passion for words and knowledge, was to step into his study, as I did for many, many years. He had so many books, custom shelves were built to fit his study from floor to ceiling. His desk was surrounded by a fortress of dictionaries and thesauruses. Oftentimes, one had to call out to him or look over the towering stacks to see if he was in the room. Somehow he was able to fit a clock radio (which perpetually played classical music), an amber ashtray, a small, high-powered fan and his asthmatic printer, alongside his collection of books. It was comedic, really. He lived and breathed, ostensibly, to edit and translate. In his leisure time, I would catch him in the middle of proofreading anything he saw in print — a restaurant menu, a poster on the subway, a billboard sign, a playbook at the theater.

I imagine, this is the elaborated perception of him, for many of his friends and acquaintances. When I first met him, I was 8, a timid and sad little girl living in a home of turmoil and chaos. He was Mr. Sevag, my third-grade teacher. At the time, I attended an Armenian school in Woodside, Queens. It was a fledgling school with a very small student population. It was where my mother would meet him, and they would marry years later. Not only did he teach at the school, but he was also the school bus driver. He was 35 years old and married with a young son. He seemed a happy wanderer, unsure of himself, yet invested in life.

Eventually, he left teaching for a brief stint in real estate, and then settled into a position as managing editor at the English-language *Armenian Reporter*, one of the leading Armenian newspapers, for 20 years. He moved on to become editor of *Ararat*, a highly-respected Armenian literary journal of 50 years at the time, publishing works of notable historians, writers and journalists. At the end of his career at the Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU), he continued freelance editing and translating.

In a *New York Times* article “Severing a Link, Word by Word; As Language Erodes, Armenian Exiles Fear Bigger Loss,” Aris reflected candidly about how Armenians may soon lose grasp of their native literature, “We are losing our multigenerational thread. We are losing our ability to understand the Armenian gestalt, our inner world.” Perhaps this is his demure attestation to what drove him to edit and translate so dedicatedly.

The aspect of him that I embrace more fully than any other was his ability to give of himself completely. It was his most compelling grace and his detrimental flaw. I would slip into his office and take a cigarette from his pack, sit on the library bench, and talk. Sometimes I wouldn’t. I would bring him my novice stories, which he returned to me diligently, his neat, red pen marks dancing across the pages. I asked him once, in the midst of a neurotic philosophical crisis: “How do you become intelligent? Where does intelligence come from?” He grinned. “Books,” he said. “You have to read as much as you can.”

After his passing, I received an email from his best friend in college, Don. He relayed stories of my stepfather that shouldn’t have surprised me, but did anyway. On one particular trip to Harvard for a game, the car overheated so many times that it took Aris, Don and their friends 12 hours to drive from Pennsylvania to Boston. Aris entertained them with his violin, playing show tunes and concertos while sprawled out on the car roof. The following year, they dressed up as police officers and pretended to arrest one of their colleagues, causing complete mayhem on campus. And a more predictable bit, Aris and Don revived Penn’s humor magazine, *The Punchbowl*, where Aris wrote satirical articles and parodies.

Don was kind enough to forward an exchange between him and my step-father, where they discuss Morse Peckham’s *Man’s Rage for Chaos*, which theorizes that order is man’s freedom, although we rage for chaos. Aris writes to Don, “If it weren’t for the fact that I used my computer to read Peckham’s statement about *Man’s Rage for Chaos* and tell you I enjoyed reading it, I could swear no time has passed since our college days. That feeling, if momentary, is an instance of man’s ability to reign supremely, albeit ever so briefly.” Two weeks later, Aris passed away.

For our family and his dearest friends, he was a legend. In writing this, it has been a great strain to forfeit to the economy of words. How I wish he was here to read this. Red pen in hand, he’d have much work to do, I’m sure.

(Aida Zilelian is a first-generation American-Armenian writer, educator and storyteller from Queens, NY. She is the author *The Legacy of Lost Things* (2015, Bleeding Heart Publications) which was the recipient of the 2014 Tololyan Literary Award. Aida’s most recently completed novel, *All the Ways We Lied*, is slated for release in January 2024.)



Monument Dedicated to Armenian-Polish Friendship Unveiled

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — A cross-stone dedicated to the age-old Armenian-Polish friendship and to the late Pope John Paul II was unveiled on May 16.

The cross-stone (khachkar) was inaugurated and consecrated in the Cross-stone Park on Buzand Street.

The unveiling coincided with the 20th anniversary of Pope John Paul II's visit to Armenia on the occasion of the 1,700th anniversary of adoption of Christianity as state religion.

Pope John Paul II (18 May 1920 – 2 April 2005), born Karol Józef Wojtyła in Poland, was the first non-Italian pope since Adrian VI in the 16th century. He was head of the Catholic Church from 1978 until his

death in 2005.

High Commissioner for Diaspora Zareh Sinanyan delivered remarks at the ceremony, noting that the cross-stone symbolizes and reaffirms the centuries-old friendship between the Armenian and Polish peoples.

"The Armenian-Polish relations have a rich history, Armenians have been living in Poland for over six centuries and they were able to thrive and create a rich culture thanks to the kind attitude of the Polish people and government, and at the same time to contribute to the enrichment of Poland's state, socio-economic and cultural life in various areas, which has been appreciated by the Polish people and government," Sinanyan said.

Sinanyan added that the Polish community in Armenia, albeit small in numbers, is active and has a significant role in the public life of the country and serves as a unique bridge between the friendly peoples and countries.

Jan Dziejczak, Secretary of State, was also in attendance.

"I am happy to be in a place where over 1,700 years ago Christianity was adopted as a state religion for the first time. A place where over 20 years ago Pope John Paul II conducted a pilgrimage to Armenia on the occasion of the adoption of Christianity. Back then, he joined Armenians with prayers for the Christians killed during the genocide," he said.

He described the cross-stone as a symbol of the connection between the faiths of Armenians and Poles.

The cross-stone was opened through joint efforts by Hrachya Boyajyan, the Honorary Consul of Armenia to Poland and Chairman of the Armenian-Polish Public Committee, and Andrzej Sosnowski, the Director of the Department of Religion and National and Ethnic Minorities, sponsored by the Prime Minister of Poland and the Armenian-Polish Public Committee.



The cross stone dedicated to the late Pope John Paul II

Suren Sargsyan to Lecture on Foreign Policy

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He holds a BA degree in law from Yerevan State University, LLM from the American University of Armenia, and an LLM degree in international law from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University. He is a lecturer at the Brusov State University in Armenia and was a teaching assistant and later co-teacher at the Fletcher School from 2014 to 2016.



Sargsyan has held different positions in the government of Armenia. He worked at the office of the President of Armenia as a legal adviser under two former presidents of Armenia from 2004-2011. He served as legal and foreign affairs adviser to the prime minister of Armenia, the speaker of the Parliament of Armenia, and the Chief Justice of the Constitutional Court of Armenia.

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