

International

Will Armenian-Azerbaijani dialogue continue?

On June 28, 2007, a joint Armenian-Azerbaijani delegation visited Karabakh, Armenia, and Azerbaijan. This initiative was realized after a year and a half of bilateral discussions. The visit was a departure from Azerbaijan's usual hostile rhetoric and policy. But it is still unclear, if the trip will open the way for more dialogue or become an exception from the norm.

Hrachya Arzumanyan, a Stepanakert-based contributor to the Armenian Reporter interviewed Dr. Ludmila Grigorian, a physician and civic activist from Stepanakert, who was part of this unique delegation. Her thoughts and insight make for a compelling story.

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International

Armenian congressional caucus member Rep. John Tierney talks about his trip Azerbaijan

Representative John Tierney (D-Mass.) has been a longtime supporter of the Armenian causes in Congress. As part of his work on the congressional Select Intelligence Committee, Rep. Tierney was in Azerbaijan last week where he discussed U.S. concerns about Iran and other issues with Azeri officials.

Azerbaijani government put out a press release saying that "considering the activities of the Armenian community" the congressman was happy to hear the other side. Our Washington Editor *Emil Sanamyan* talked to Rep. Tierney to see if that made a difference in his views on Karabakh.

On the issue of Karabakh, the

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Armenia



Aram Antonyan, blacksmith, sculptor, Armenian, is the hero of a new installment of Armen Hakobyan's Armenia at Work series.

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Community

Crime Beat: In gang-related shootings in Southern California, police get little cooperation

Marat Manukyan, 18, was killed on April 26 in gang violence, *Jason Kandel* writes.

A 17-year-old boy was held on suspicion of murder. But the Los Angeles District Attorney declined to file charges for lack of evidence. Witnesses wouldn't cooperate, Detective Martin Pinner said.

ate and allow killers to roam the streets than to put themselves in a position where they'd have to testify," Pinner said. "We need general, everyday community members to make the system function properly. Without that cooperation, we end up with cases like this."

The case remains unresolved.

"They'd rather not cooper-

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President Kocharian in working visit to France meets President Sarkozy

Concludes Year of Armenia in France

by Emil Sanamyan

PARIS – President Nicolas Sarkozy of France and President Robert Kocharian of Armenia held an hour-long meeting at the Élysée Palace on July 12, continuing the close high-level relationship the two countries' successive leaders have developed over the last decade.

"We have reconfirmed all the goals we set in the past, and we have also tried to outline new areas of cooperation," Mr. Kocharian said. "It was a very specific and pragmatic discussion, and I am satisfied with its outcome and the atmosphere of our meeting. We are going to continue our contacts."

Pres. Kocharian's working visit on July 11–13 also included meetings with the presidents of the two chambers of the French legislature – Christian Poncelet of the Senate



President Sarkozy received President Kocharian at the Élysée Palace. Photolure.

and Bernard Accoyer of the National Assembly.

Armenia's president was last in France in February of this year, when he first met with Mr. Sarkozy, who was then the French interior minister and a presidential candidate. Mr. Sarkozy was elected president in May.

Mr. Sarkozy's predecessor as president, Jacques Chirac, made a state visit to Armenia last fall. Mr. Chirac's visit kicked off the Year of Armenia in France. Mr. Kocharian's visit marks the conclusion of the program on July 14, which comprised some 400 cultural events all over France.

Alex and Marie Manoogian's earthly remains arrive in Holy Etchmiadzin

YEREVAN – The earthly remains of Alex and Marie Manoogian will be reinterred in Holy Etchmiadzin on July 17, the Mother See announced last week. Mr. Manoogian, a National Hero of the Republic of Armenia, was Life President of the Armenian General Benevolent Union. He died in 1996. Mrs. Manoogian had died in 1992. They had previously been interred in Detroit.

On Friday, July 13, the caskets arrived in Armenia. Louise Manoogian Simone, the daughter of Alex and Marie Manoogian, and other Manoogian family members were on hand, as was Berge Setrakian, president of the Armenian General Benevolent Union.

His Holiness Karekin II, the Catholicos of All Armenians, National Assembly Speaker Tigran Torosian, Prime Minister Serge Sargsian, and other dignitaries were at the airport to greet the Air France flight.

The cortege moved from the airport to the Monastery of Saint Gayane in Vagharshapat, and the



The remains of Alex and Marie Manoogian lie in state in the St. Gayane monastery in Vagharshapat, awaiting the June 17 reburial at Holy Etchmiadzin. Photo: Photolure.

caskets were placed inside the sanctuary, where they will lie in repose until July 17.

Inside the monastery, the catholicos offered a solemn requiem. "Our free land receives today its dedicated scions . . . who lived and contributed selfless efforts for the love of the renaissance and vibrancy of the spiritual and national life

of our people dispersed throughout the world," Karekin II said.

"They created the luminous path of their own lives, as well as the lives of countless Armenians, with the faith and vision of a renewed, prosperous, and flourishing homeland."

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Jazz against racism

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Huberta von Voss draws portraits of Armenians here, there, and everywhere



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The Lark Farm

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INTERNATIONAL

Genocide scholars honor Ambassador John Evans

by Emil Sanamyan

YEREVAN – The diplomat whose career was cut short by the U.S. State Department after he spoke openly about the Armenian Genocide was honored by the International Association of Genocide Scholars (IAGS) this week.

Former U.S. Ambassador to Armenia John Evans received the association's Raoul Wallenberg award on July 12 during the association's week-long conference in Sarajevo in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The IAGS conference agenda said that the award went to Mr. Evans "for speaking out when diplomats are expected to remain silent, and

for calling upon the United States government to recognize the Armenian Genocide."

In his prepared remarks, made available to the *Armenian Reporter*, Mr. Evans stressed that his effort was certainly in a different league from that of Mr. Wallenberg, the Swedish humanitarian who under diplomatic cover in World War II Hungary helped protect Jews from the Nazi Holocaust.

"I simply violated a strict taboo, and differed publicly with my government, when, at UCLA and Berkeley in 2005, I used the term 'genocide' to describe – accurately, in my view – what happened to the Armenians of Anatolia in 1915," Mr. Evans said.

While "nothing can fully compensate the Armenian people for the death and destruction they suffered," Mr. Evans added, "at a minimum the truth should be affirmed," as has been done in various national parliaments and can be done in the U.S. Congress should the House of Representatives' leadership schedule a vote on House Resolution 106, supported by 221 members of Congress as of July 12.

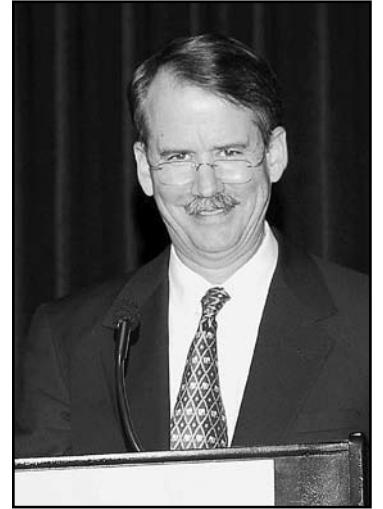
IAGS, which is chaired by the Israeli scholar Dr. Israel Charny, has previously spoken out in support of defining as genocide the Armenian experience in the Ottoman Empire

Mr. Evans also pointed to the recent insurance settlements over

unclaimed policies held by Armenians who were murdered in the Genocide, saying "more needs to be done."

"Bottling up the truth and treating it as taboo gets us precisely nowhere," he stressed. "This long-standing problem dating from the early years of the 20th century needs to be fairly and honestly dealt with, for the good of both Armenians and Turks, and for the future stability of the region."

At the same conference, another IAGS award went to Turkish publisher Ragıp Zarakolu for "outstanding contributions to the battle against deniers of the Armenian Genocide and all denials of Genocides." ❏



John Evans.

U.S., Azerbaijani officials discuss security issues

Azerbaijan's democracy record and threats over Karabakh are glossed over

by Emil Sanamyan

WASHINGTON – U.S. and Azerbaijani officials discussed security cooperation in talks held here this week. Deputy Foreign Minister Araz Azimov led a delegation to the U.S. that included officials from six of Azerbaijan's seven militarized agencies for the "10th annual bilateral security dialogue."

The visit was originally scheduled for April but it was postponed after Azerbaijan protested a decision by the State Department to correct a passage about the Karabakh con-

flict in one of its reports. (The State Department later reversed that decision.)

While the United States is seeking Azerbaijan's cooperation to undermine Russian energy dominance in Eurasia and help contain Iran, Azerbaijan's own domestic record and threatening posture toward Armenia appear to be taking a back seat.

In a July 9 press conference, Mr. Azimov said that his government was ready for an "increased partnership with the U.S. whose commitment to Azerbaijan's . . . sovereignty and total integrity remains unswerving," a veiled reference to Azerbaijan's claims on Karabakh.

Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Matt Bryza weighed in that while his government has a "deep commitment to Azerbaijan's . . . territorial integrity," in the matter of the Karabakh conflict it is also looking for a compromise between that principle and "people's right to

self-determination." And, he added, "there's no universal formula... to do that."

Mr. Bryza did not raise Azerbaijan's continued threats to launch a war in Karabakh. He described cooperation on security, energy, and democratic reform as the three focal issues in bilateral discussions.

Asked by the *Armenian Reporter* whether the matter of the recently intensified crackdown on mass media in Azerbaijan, particularly the imprisonment of Eynulla Fatullayev, had been raised in talks, Mr. Bryza said, "We're going to do it probably tomorrow."

But Mr. Azimov retorted that such issues are not "related to the current agenda of my presence here" and that security cooperation and democratic issues should be addressed separately.

Meantime, U.S. human rights advocates argued during a July 12 congressional hearing that the United States "could better bal-



Deputy Foreign Minister Azimov of Azerbaijan. Photo: *Armenian Reporter*.

ance human rights promotion with other strategic interests," the

Washington-based Freedom House reported the same day.

The organization's executive director Elizabeth Windsor said in a statement that Azerbaijan, like Cuba and Egypt, "arrests journalists for practicing their profession, stifles meaningful political competition, shows a blatant disregard for internationally recognized human rights, and seeks to isolate its people from the global dialogue on freedom."

Unlike Cuba, which is under U.S. embargo, both Egypt and Azerbaijan, including their security agencies directly implicated in human rights violations, are recipients of U.S. assistance.

When first announced last week, the Congressional hearing was titled "Is there a Human Rights Double Standard: U.S. Policy toward Azerbaijan, Cuba, and Egypt?" But earlier this week the title was changed to "Ideals vs. Reality in Human Rights and U.S. Foreign Policy." ❏

Rep. Tierney discusses Iran concerns with Azerbaijani officials



Rep. John Tierney.

Clarifies his position on the Karabakh conflict

by Emil Sanamyan

YEREVAN – Rep. John Tierney (D.-Mass), a member of the Select Committee on Intelligence, was last week in Baku where he met senior Azerbaijani officials on July 3.

Although Azerbaijan's state news agency AzerTag reported the next day that talks focused on bilateral relations, Rep. Tierney told the *Armenian Reporter* in a telephone

interview on July 13 that the focus was really Iran.

AzerTag also reported that "considering the activities of the Armenian community in the United States, [Rep. Tierney] stressed the importance of the comprehensive information he received about [Azerbaijan] and the Armenian-Azerbaijani, Nagorno-Karabakh conflict during his meetings."

Asked whether the description was accurate, Mr. Tierney said he "assume[s] that the [Azeri officials] are putting the best face on what they wanted to talk about and that is to be expected."

"They were quite aware that I am a member of the Armenian

Caucasus [in Congress], so I did not want them to think that I was going there surreptitiously. I also told them that I was married to an Armenian, so [the Karabakh issue] feels closer to home."

Discussing his position on the conflict, Mr. Tierney made it clear that he and other Caucus members "oppose the blockade, oppose violence, oppose any renewed aggression, and want the will of the people of Nagorno-Karabakh to be respected."

Mr. Tierney confirmed that the trip was part of his work on the intelligence committee. "The concern that we have is that [the Caucasus countries] work with us co-

operatively in the understanding that Iran poses a potential threat to all of them . . . whether through international terrorism or otherwise."

Mr. Tierney added that in Azerbaijan one of the topics discussed was "the large Azeri population in Iran and how that situation can go both ways. To some extent this could be a force that could moderate things going into Iran, because they have a concern that those folks not turn against Iran and become a problem. On the other hand it makes things difficult, because it facilitates infiltration from Iran, intelligence and other people, into Azerbaijan." ❏

Second European-Armenian convention set for October

Conferees to develop new Armenian expectations of an evolving Europe

BRUSSELS – The growth of the Armenian community as a powerful voice in the civic life of Europe will mark a major milestone with the convening, this October, of the second Convention of European Armenians, the organizers promised

in a news release.

The pan-European convention, to be held October 15 and 16 in the halls of the European Parliament, is being organized by the European Armenian Federation.

The convention comes on the 20th anniversary of the European Union's landmark resolution recognizing the Armenian Genocide. It promises to provide European citizens of Armenian heritage the opportunity to share views, discuss priorities, and build consensus on the current issues and future challenges Armenia and Armenians face

in a rapidly changing Europe. The gathering will be an opportunity also to meet with European leaders.

Among the key issues to be addressed are the EU's partial freezing of negotiations with an increasingly intransigent Turkey, and the evolution of the union's relations with Armenia and the entire South Caucasus region.

The convention will be organized around three main sessions:

❏ Twenty years of progress since the recognition of the Armenian Genocide by the European Parliament

❏ Europe's role in peace and security in the South Caucasus region

❏ Ongoing Armenian Genocide recognition efforts and the struggle to counter Genocide denial

The European Armenian Federation promises to send European-Armenian associations, groups, and organizations a preliminary document outlining its priorities.

"We invite all the members of our European-Armenian communities and all the many diverse European-Armenian associations to participate in the preparations

for the Second Convention of the European Armenians, to attend and actively take part in its deliberations, and to lend their unique contributions to developing a common message that we can deliver to European civic society and leadership," said Hilda Tchoboian, chairperson of the European Armenian Federation.

The European Armenian Federation encourages all those who wish to attend the Convention to begin registering now by email or via the <http://www.eafjd.org> website. ❏

International

Will Armenian-Azerbaijani dialogue continue?

Ludmila Grigorian recounts June 28 meeting and looks to the future



Ludmila Grigorian.

Editor's Note: For nearly a year and a half, the ambassadors of Armenia and Azerbaijan to Russia, **Armen Smbatian** and **Polad Bul-bul-ogly**, developed and lobbied for the idea of a joint trip to Karabakh and the capitals of Armenia and Azerbaijan. This unique initiative finally materialized on June 28, and, in addition to the ambassadors themselves, it involved four other prominent individuals from each side.

Dr. Ludmila Grigorian, a physician and civic activist from Stepanakert, was the only female participant. She shared her impressions with **Hrachya Arzumian** on July 5, 2007, in Stepanakert.

HA: How did you first become involved in civic activism and human rights issues?

LG: I was born in a family of veteran Communist Party members and our home was always full of conversations about Karabakh, its fate, its future. So for me, civic activism was very natural and somewhat of a norm. My husband and I were living in Leninakan [Ed. – now Gyumri] when the Karabakh Movement began in early 1988, and we moved to Stepanakert to be in the middle of it all.

I was certainly not a public persona or a politician back then and my participation in this movement was more a realization of my spiritual drive and principles. Our home was near Stepanakert's main square, which became the focal point of non-stop demonstrations and strikes. Initially, I saw my role as assisting those taking part in the demonstrations, and I thought that politicians should be left to deal with serious issues. But step by step, I began to be drawn into the movement, becoming an active participant in various meetings and public addresses.

Then the war came along with its brutality. The loss of my husband, my own serious injury and subsequent treatment in various cities and lengthy rehabilitation – the story of my family is typical for Karabakh families that bore the brunt of the war. Following my rehabilitation, I returned to Karabakh to head a front line field hospital for the army's Assault Regiment, then to become the army's chief therapist. Currently, I am Chief of Therapy in the NKR Health Ministry.

HA: Why do you think you were invited to take part in this initiative?

LG: Perhaps it was my independent image – I never parroted anyone. I can collect myself in difficult moments and be absurdly brave at times. My experience in the independence movement from its very first days and my war record – all these factors taken together probably led to the [NKR] leadership deciding to suggest me for participation in this initiative.

I do believe that I am one of those people who have the moral right to speak in the name of those who saw that war, those who fought in

– the old one, where his father was born, and the newer one now occupied by a family displaced from Getashen [under Azerbaijani control since 1991]. Polad talked to the woman living there and as he was leaving shook her hand and said: "Please, continue to live here. When someone lives in a house, it stands. It would have been worse, if no one lived here."

After leaving Shushi we went to the heliport and flew to Yerevan for a meeting with President Robert Kocharian, who welcomed us and talked about the need for such contacts, and that such efforts were long overdue. Then the heads of the Azerbaijani and our delegation once again outlined the initiative.

Pres. Kocharian then suggested that I, as the only representative from Karabakh, should say a few words as well. Without violating the mission's format, he made it clear to everyone that no matter the level of the cultural dialogue between Armenia and Azerbaijan, the Karabakh issue cannot be discussed without Karabakh itself. After that meeting which concluded on a friendly note, we were taken to the Sergei Parajanov museum which impressed everyone.

Then we were taken back to our bus and the plane. We landed in Baku, where we were met by representatives of their Ministries of Foreign Affairs and National Security. The atmosphere was rather calm, even friendly. Baku has changed significantly in recent years, with a lot of construction taking place. Some of the Armenian delegation members remembered the old Baku and that was well received by the Azerbaijani participants.

We went into the presidential palace, with its Middle Eastern extravagance, and were ushered into President Ilham Aliyev's reception hall. We waited for 15 to 20 minutes. The protocol demanded that every one of us stood behind the chair on which we were to sit down. And so we waited standing up until Pres. Aliyev arrived.

When he did, he greeted everyone rather coldly. I think all participants noted the striking difference between the good will of the Armenian Presidents and the cold, even tense reception of the Azerbaijani one.

The meeting began with Polad briefly explaining the point of the initiative. Then it was Pres. Aliyev's turn. Without changing his facial expressions he began to repeat all the formulas that he frequently uses at official meetings; about the seven occupied districts and hundreds of thousands of refugees.

As I was listening, it became clear to me that a continuation of our mission would be quite problematic. I am the type of person who tries to identify a constructive element in any situation, in this case I was just flabbergasted. I did not want to speak up aggressively, but I did not want to pretend either. All I wanted to do at that moment was just to leave quietly.

And it was just then that Polad said, "Mr. President, I wanted a participant from Karabakh to say a few words – Ludmila Grigorian is a doctor, a representative of the humanitarian profession."

So, at that point there was no going back.

"Mr. President," I began, "if it was not for your words and your tone, which differed so much from what we heard from two of our Presidents earlier, I would just limit myself to a simple greeting. But you decided to go beyond the framework of the mission, and I am forced to say that I am a widow

who raised three orphans, that I was wounded, and I don't want to continue that list because it would only distance us from the goals we identified. There is so much pessimism in your voice that it leaves me without a hope for the future – and I am not even talking about resolving our issues, I am talking about having a dialogue between our nations."

Pres. Aliyev appeared to become agitated, but I went on:

"You are talking about hundreds of thousands of refugees, who live in inhuman conditions. I am sorry – but did this rich country, which we just saw, find no funds or a decent place to settle your own compatriots? You are keeping them in reservations, because you cannot afford to provide them with a decent living? I am sorry – but years ago not a fewer number of refugees were settled in the Armenian states, and today they are full-fledged citizens. Or perhaps you are keeping refugees in tent cities to use them as a catalyst for anti-Armenian sentiments, to stoke hatred and call for war?"

"We are not overestimating the importance of today's meetings. And I am certainly far from thinking that we can resolve the Karabakh problem in half an hour. All we wanted is to receive your approval for our contacts in the spheres of science and culture. Our presidents supported us, but your pessimistic tone has put an end to the atmosphere of good will that we enjoyed from nine o'clock this morning until now."

There was silence in the room for a while, with everyone unwilling to break the pause. Then Pres. Aliyev said, "Yes, your presidents can afford to be welcoming and friendly because they are talking from the position of victors and not the vanquished."

And at that moment, I have to say I did feel like a victor. I thought to myself: With all the riches his country has, can Pres. Aliyev suffer from so many complexes that he could not even afford us diplomatic tact and tone?

After several general phrases the meeting was over.

After that we visited the Armenian Church building in Baku. On the outside it is pretty much the same, but inside there is now a state library. They say the government decided to put the library there to prevent it from being destroyed by local nationalists. "We could not save it in any other way," said Polad.

Then there was dinner and informal conversations, during which Polad tried to broach ways that would bring Karabakh under Azerbaijani sovereignty.

"You know," he said, "Azerbaijani oil is really black gold. And I noticed that life is difficult for you [in Karabakh]..." Then he would try to present an optimistic scenario of how the Azerbaijani oil could make Karabakh flourish.

Well, I told the Ambassador, in the early days of the Karabakh Movement in 1988 [after the anti-Armenian violence began in Azerbaijan], we decided to cut off all links with Azerbaijan. The Soviet Union was still around, but Karabakh was blockaded, there was a real threat of hunger.

On occasion, Azerbaijan would dispatch food supplies by rail or on trucks to curry favor with us, but we would refuse it. [At the time Stepanakert was controlled by Soviet internal security forces.] There would be unguarded trucks with candy, pastries, coffee in Stepanakert's main square. But not

even our hungry children would come up to these trucks to take the candy.

You could call it insanity, perhaps it was. But that was Artsakh's determination in those difficult years. Azerbaijan could not buy us when we were hungry, when we were facing war and had no weapons to defend ourselves.

Today, we can fend for ourselves, we are supported by the Armenian Diaspora and we are not hungry. So, I told Polad, don't try to bribe us today – this demeans both you and us. Let us try to build our ties on a different basis.

HA: Did the Azerbaijani Ambassador understand your last message?

LG: I think so. During that entire day, he openly expressed his interest in me and by extension in Karabakh. He was trying to understand, how we live, what we think about, what we are striving to achieve.

HA: Will the initiative be continued?

LG: I would not rule it out. I told Pres. Aliyev that while politicians are looking for a political solution, our two nations are drifting further apart from each other, and when a mutually agreed solution is found there will be an issue of whether our societies are ready to accept it. What prevents us from preparing our societies today, so that they can help prod politicians towards a solution?

Another possibility is that the contacts will go back to the level of non-governmental organizations. This seems to be likely, considering the information campaign now underway in the Azerbaijani media [against the Ambassadors' initiative]. From the Armenian side there are no artificial obstacles and we are ready to discuss all the issues raised. But is Azerbaijani society ready? Those whom I know and with whom we have been in touch during the latest mission are probably ready. There is educated youth that should meet and debate.

The issue is who will prevail in Azerbaijani society – the initiative's participants and others like them or those who are now organizing the campaign against them in the media. So far, the general atmosphere in Azerbaijan remains tense and intolerant. Such is Azerbaijani society, its political elite and it is a major problem for all of us.

To sum up, today, we are facing a paradox; while at first a hand is extended from the Azerbaijani side it is also being pulled back from the same side. We are left to wait until Azerbaijani society is ready for normal contacts and relations, which would without doubt benefit the entire South Caucasus.

P.S. During July 9 State Department press conference held jointly by U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Matt Bryza and Azerbaijani Deputy Foreign Minister Araz Azimov, the Armenian Reporter asked if there was an effort to build on the June 28 meetings. Mr. Bryza called the visit "a significant development... a major, serious, confidence-building measure," yet "not a breakthrough."

Mr. Azimov said he did not anticipate an immediate follow-up. "The [June 28] visit has not been charged with a concrete task, because it was, again, an initiative of the two ambassadors of Azerbaijan and Armenia to Russia." He described it more as an exercise to collect "more objective information" rather than a confidence-building effort the two ambassadors talked about. ■■■

International

A “gathering of visionaries and futurists” at first ArmTech Conference

by Michael McAllister

SAN FRANCISCO – The growth of Armenia’s high technology industry was the major goal of the ArmTech conference this past weekend in San Francisco. ArmTech, the debut conference organized by the Silicon Valley-based Armenian Technology Congress, was held at San Francisco’s Fairmont Hotel July 4–7. Organizers brought together representatives of industry, government, and higher education from both Armenia and the United States to present potential investors with a look at the current economic climate in Armenia, and with various investment opportunities.

The conference, which attracted over two hundred registrants from around the world, arranged presentations and panels into various program tracks, including Education, Software, Telecommunications, Research and Development, and Professional Networking. Between panels the conference participants socialized over coffee in a lunch room where various government agencies and high tech companies with headquarters or branches in Armenia had set up informational displays. Other social events included a bay cruise on Thursday night and a formal banquet with dancing on Friday night.

Armenian Foreign Minister Vartan Oskanian addressed the participants at Saturday’s closing session, calling the conference a “gathering of visionaries and futurists.” He mentioned the issues that Armenia faced in its first years of independence, issues largely of survival. “But Armenia’s demands have changed,” he said. “We move from humanitarian needs to developmental needs.” Pointing to studies that have ranked Armenia’s recent economy as among the world’s

most open and liberal, Oskanian said Armenians should take great pride in the political and economic reforms made in the past fifteen years, but cautioned that further work was needed. “Let’s admit it,” he said. “Those reforms were the easier ones. The most obvious ones. The most necessary ones. To be able to tap new resources, we’ve got to engage with the second generation of political and economic reforms.”

According to Oskanian, part of Armenia’s recent prevalence in its region was due to the comparative problems of its neighbors. Those neighbors, Oskanian said, were in the process of searching for and unlocking their potential. But today those potentials have materialized and Armenia’s neighbors are reaping the benefits. “So the nature of our competition in the region has changed,” he said. “We cannot maintain our competitiveness in the region if we do not constantly seek out new resources. Those resources will come from Armenian and Diaspora,” he said. “It is precisely these kinds of gatherings that provide those resources. You represent nationhood across borders,” he told the conference participants.

Oskanian highlighted two areas that Armenia needs to address in its development; education, and research and development. Citing the growth of the knowledge-based economy, Oskanian said that Armenia must revamp its educational system, to provide its students not only with facts and information, but to also enable them to turn that knowledge into assets with which they can remain competitive in the increasingly globalized world. He challenged the conference participants to become involved in the Rural Development Program, recently adopted by the Armenian Fund mandate, which in part will

address deficiencies in the education of Armenia’s rural students.

Oskanian called research and development the “weak link in the chain of our economic development.” He urged conference participants to become more engaged in deepening the cooperation between scientists in Armenia and scientists throughout the world. “Our scientists need to be nurtured,” he said. “They need to be engaged. They need to be exposed to the Western style of doing things.”

Echoing many of Oskanian’s comments, ArmTech program coordinator Yervant Zorian presented a summary of the concerns and conclusions discussed during the conference’s various panels and presentations. Again and again, representatives of industries such as software, telecommunications, and superconductors, spoke about the challenge of “human capital.” Today the most pressing issue facing Armenia’s high tech industry, at least according to conference participants, was the need for a larger pool of educated high tech workers, and a larger pool of high tech educators at the university level. Today’s young technologists invariably find work in the high tech industries, leaving possible careers in higher education for larger salaries at corporations. Armenia’s educators are aging, and its educational institutions are losing potential researchers to the companies.

But even the corporations, with their larger pockets, are having trouble recruiting the necessary numbers of skilled workers. Various recommendations were made: greater collaboration between higher education and industries; revision of current university curriculum; more on-the-job training; the establishment of a two-year associate’s degree in high tech fields to populate the industry with ad-

ditional human resources. It was also recommended that Armenia begin educating their students at younger ages in developing computer skills.

Rich Goldman, ArmTech co-chair and CEO of Synopsis Armenia, a high tech company specializing in electronic design automation (EDA), informed ArmTech participants that concrete developments had occurred due to discussions made at the conference. First was the formation of a coalition of Armenia’s EDA companies to address the educational issues raised at the conference. The coalition’s first meeting will be in Yerevan in September. Secondly, Synopsis agreed to fund a named professor seat in the microelectronics department at Russian-Armenian State University. To attract younger professors, the seat would have an age limit, and would be funded at a more attractive salary. The professorship would be introduced this coming fall semester.

Aside from educational issues, program coordinator Yervant Zorian mentioned other recommendations for Armenia’s high tech industry: the creation of an IT zone, with tax incentives; the creation of a venture capital fund in the software industry; the formation of a single government body to look after the industry, to provide a bridge to the outside world, and to promote the industry in Western markets; the formation of Armenian “presences” in various high tech centers like Silicon Valley; the encouragement of Diaspora executives to bring business to Armenia; the creation of an online “portal” for the sharing of scientific discoveries, developments, and documents; the creation of another portal to provide information on funding and research grants; and more government

funding in basic and long-term research projects.

Challenges to Armenia’s high tech industry, as discussed at the conference, included the delay and mishandling of computer equipment in Customs; the lack of maintenance for sophisticated computer equipment; the inadequate collection of taxes; the need for more reliable broadband Internet connection; and the situation with the dram, which can prohibit new investments.

ArmTech ‘07’s closing session also included a panel on the future of ArmTech, which is envisioned as occurring every two years. Organizers solicited feedback from participants during this session, and while most who gave feedback spoke encouragingly of the debut conference, they did make several suggestions, including a greater emphasis on professional networking; a greater emphasis on presenting the collective capabilities of Armenians to non-Armenians; a focus on getting larger American companies, such as Intel and Microsoft, to participate in the next conference; providing simultaneous translation of the conference into Armenian; and a greater participation from Russian representatives.

More than one participant remarked that two years was a long time to wait between conferences, and recommendations were made to form smaller conferences in the interim, possibly in Armenia itself, as well as in locations with considerable Diaspora representation. At the very end of the closing session, registrants from various countries, including Brazil, Canada, and France, had volunteered themselves for regional committees, in an effort to extend the work done at the conference. ☞

Oskanian calls for partnerships among specialists and professionals

What follows is the text of the remarks delivered by Foreign Minister Vartan Oskanian at the ArmTech 2007 conference in San Francisco.

I want to congratulate all of you, and especially Tony Moroyan and the committee that succeeded in attracting you here for what can only be described as a gathering of visionaries and futurists.

This is the second time in a week that I’ve had a chance to address a large, organized group of specialists from Armenia and the diaspora, together. Last Saturday morning, in Yerevan, I spoke to 1700 health care professionals who were exploring ways of bringing their know-how to Armenia’s health care institutions.

I’m not a physician. Nor am I an IT professional, but I flew 20 hours to tell you what I told them: partnership among specialists and professionals is the way of the future for Armenia-Diaspora relations.

Fifteen years and more have passed since we gained, or re-gained, independence. Since we are living this history and not watching it from afar or reading about it, the full import of this transformational event is not yet fully clear for us.

Of course, there are already various assessments of this period. But there is one achievement that is unquestionable: despite the most dire, most restrictive, most acute social and economic conditions, to everyone’s great astonishment, not only did we survive, but we competed with our neighbors, and, in many areas, we came out ahead of

them. Armenian statehood is consolidated. We are on the path of democracy. We do have an economy that is consistently rated open and liberal. Each of these triumphs is a source of pride.

Don’t build school buildings or construct water pipes. There are already generous donors who will do that. You help to devise a program that will provide our village students with computer skills.

Our triumphs, as well our failures, were created by all of us, together, inherited by us all, together, and like it or not, will serve as the basis of the agenda we develop together for our country’s development in the next period of our history. No group should take credit for our successes, no group should be blamed for our mistakes.

To move forward, we must acknowledge two important, new realities. First, domestically, all that we have achieved we owe to reforms that were the less controversial changes, particularly from the

perspective of the economic and political elites and their interests. Let’s not forget that those reforms were the most obvious. They succeeded due first and foremost to the resiliency of our people, faith and commitment in the future, and their hard work. Now, we have completed and exhausted those initial, straightforward transformations. Today, we need additional, deeper, indispensable, second-generation reforms which are more difficult to identify, formulate and adopt.

Second, regionally, we managed to compete with and beat our neighbors in this decade and a half when our neighbors were still in the process of seeking their advantages. Today, the situation is strikingly different. Today, our neighbors’ strengths are no longer just potential tools; they are already exploiting their real assets and reaping the benefits. Therefore, now that the nature of our competition has changed, Armenia must exercise the resiliency that is part of our national character to find or create new resources, in order to preserve our favorable position.

Some of those new resources will come from Armenia, some from the Diaspora. None of those are under the earth, our resources are around the earth. Groups such as this are part of those new resources. You represent nationhood without borders. Or, more accurately, across borders. For centuries, the idea of our nationhood was uncoupled from both statehood and from territory. To-

Foreign Minister Vartan Oskanian.
File photo:
Photolure.



day, we have statehood and we have territory. But our traditions, history, identity and connections – and of course potential – extend beyond that territory. “You don’t belong to a place,” William Saroyan once wrote, “until one of your family has been placed into its ground.” With that logic, we belong everywhere.

The Diaspora expands the geographic reach of our nation. It also expands our capacity. We thrive on synthesis. We soak up what others have to offer and adapt it for our own use. In turn, we create, innovate, contribute to the pool of knowledge that is modern civilization. In this increasingly knowledge-based global economy, the wealth of a nation is determined by its capacity for innovation.

Our challenge – Armenia’s and Diaspora’s – is to enhance our capacity for innovation. Let’s use the

occasion of this gathering to commit to nurturing the innovators of today and tomorrow.

First, we must invest thought and money in education: Capitalism has mutated in a way that puts a premium on a knowledge economy, on technologies, on individual skills and on flexibility in both labor and business. It is education that is going to produce self-reliant citizens and feed the knowledge-based economy that is the basis of the new capitalism. If our children used to learn for the sake of learning, now they must learn to survive. Our schools and institutions must do more than teach dates and figures, they must teach how to turn knowledge into an asset in order to enable us to compete in a globalized, shrunken world.

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ARMENIA

From Armenia, in brief

President Kocharian tells Spiegel Online Armenia, Karabakh to form "asymmetric federation"

After fifteen years of independent life, the matter of Karabakh's international recognition is no longer an issue that defines its independence, President Robert Kocharian of Armenia told Germany's *Spiegel* magazine online on July 11, PanArmenian.net reported the same day.

"I see Armenia's and Karabakh's future as an asymmetric confederation. But currently the Karabakh republic is a full-fledged state, which copes with many tasks better than Azerbaijan," he said.

Lack of progress in negotiations on Karabakh's status is caused by Azerbaijan, which is "unwilling to accept reality," Mr. Kocharian argued. He encouraged Azerbaijan to realize that it is not possible to turn the wheel of history: a people who have gained self-determination will never give it up.

In response to Azerbaijan's boasts that its increased military spending means that it is now militarily stronger than Armenia, Mr. Kocharian said that while the threat of war would continue to exist for a while, "you must take into account the fact that the soldier who defends his homeland has another motivation than the one who acts on a foreign territory."

Mr. Kocharian also said that while he would prefer not to draw analogies between the Karabakh and Kosovo conflicts, "undoubtedly the Karabakh people have the same right to independence as Albanians of Kosovo; more so [considering that Karabakh Armenians] protected their right [to self-determination] without interference by the international community."

Meanwhile, on July 10 Foreign Minister Vartan Oskanian of Armenia again met with international mediators dealing with the Nagorno-Karabakh issue during a visit to France to see how the talks could be moved forward following the June 10 presidential summit that failed to produce headway.



President Robert Kocharian.

Photo: Photolure.

Descendants of Genocide-era AXA insurance policyholders urged to file for compensation

France's insurance giant AXA set aside \$11.5 million to compensate descendants of its life insurance policy holders who died in the Armenian Genocide, lawyers representing the beneficiaries in a class action suit said at a press conference in Yerevan on July 10, local news agencies reported.

Vartkes Yeghiayan and Parsogh Kartalian who led the legal team in a class action lawsuit against AXA spoke at the press conference. Mr. Kartalian said that the compensation is to be paid as a result of a May 12 verdict handed down by Judge Christina Schneider.

Mr. Kartalian said that while it is unknown exactly how many Armenian Genocide victims held AXA insurance policies, a partial list of policyholders has been published online at www.armenianinsurance.com.

Potential claimants who believe their ancestors are on the list are urged to fill out relevant forms available on that website in either English and Armenian to be mailed to Kurkjian & Ouzounian vs AXA Settlement Administrator, AXA Settlement Claim Fund, 900 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 614, Los Angeles, CA 90017, U.S.A by October 1, 2007.

As part of the \$17.5 million settlement the company agreed to pay \$11.5 million to descendants and the rest to France-based Armenian organizations and to cover legal fees.

This is a second successful Armenian Genocide-related case filed against a major insurance company.

Since 2004 the U.S. New York Life insurance company has transferred \$8 million to the Genocide victims' descendants, including \$3.6 million to those now living in Armenia, who were able to confirm that their ancestors held life insurance policies with the company and were not previously compensated.

Three killed in Yerevan cemetery shooting

A vendetta-like feud between two wealthy related families from Yerevan's Shengavit district claimed another three lives on July 8, RFE/RL and other outlets reported the next day. Artavazd Vardanian, his brother-in-law and driver were shot dead at the grave of Artavazd's father, who was himself murdered last year. No arrests have been made.

The latest killing came in apparent response to the May 9 killing of Stepan Vardanian from the rival family. Following that incident, a nearby restaurant owner Levon Gulian was summoned by police as a witness and subsequently died in controversial circumstances in custody.

Gulian's family insists that his death was either a direct result of police brutality or that brutality resulted in an effort to escape and his subsequent death. Police interrogators claim that Mr. Ghulian died as he tried to escape through a window and fell to his death. That case too remains unresolved.

Missing 12 year-old found dead in Gyumri

The decomposing body of 12-year-old Robert Simonian was found on July 11 in an abandoned build-

ing in Gyumri, the local Tsayg TV reported. According to the Office of the Prosecutor General an autopsy showed that the likely cause of death was an accidental grenade explosion.

The boy had been missing since May 20, the day of the widely reported shootout between the sons of the Gyumri mayor Vartan Ghukasian and a prominent local businessperson, Artashes Sargsian, that left at least two people wounded in the center of the city. There were suspicions that the boy may have been caught in the cross fire.

In the shootout case, three persons, including the sons - Spartak Ghoukasian and Rustam Sargsian, as well as Tigran Gasparian, are still wanted by police with two arrests made so far. Rustam Sargsian's friend Telman Karapetian was located and arrested on June 26. And Spartak Ghoukasian's cousin (and mayor's nephew) Kolya Ghoukasian turned himself in on July 9.



Lida Nanian.

First woman governor appointed in Armenia

For the first time since Armenia's new provincial division was established in 1996, a woman was appointed as provincial governor, the Armenian government reported on July 12.

Lida Nanian became governor of the Shirak province (marz). The government press service told the *Armenian Reporter* that Ms. Nanian was nominated by the ruling Republican Party. Prior to the appointment she headed Gyumri's taxation department.

Born in 1948 in the village of Shahumian of Azerbaijan's Khanlar district, Ms. Nanian graduated from the economics department of the Yerevan State University in 1968. She is married and has two children.

Ms. Nanian's predecessor as Shirak governor Romik Manukian of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation resigned following the new power-sharing deal reached following the May 2007 election.

Regulators decline tariff hike requested by Armentel

In July 13 ruling, Armenia's Public Services Regulation Commission (PSRC) declined Armentel's request the existing fixed telephone service tariffs, Panorama.am reported the same day.

Customers currently pay a fixed 1,100 dram monthly tariff for six hours of outgoing telephone calls and are charged five drams (1.5 U.S. cents) for every additional minute.

Armentel owners from Russia's Vypelkom company requested a reduction of the six hour allowance and an increase of additional per minute charges to nine drams. While that request was declined, talks between regulators and the company will continue and a compromise decision is anticipated by next October.

Vypelkom purchased Armentel from Greece's OTE last November for about \$500 million.

Millennium Challenge Corporation arrives in Meghri

Meghri's aging irrigation network is to be replaced with a gravity irrigation system funded by the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC)-Armenia, Mediamax reported on July 11. As part of this project a water reservoir with capacity of two million cubic meters will be constructed in the village of Lichik and the entire system will be repaired.

Alexan Hovhanesian, head of Meghri water supply company, noted that Meghri currently has the most expensive irrigation water in Armenia, priced at 61 drams per cubic meter, due to high energy consumption required. ■

Oskanian calls for partnerships among specialists and professionals

Continued from page A4

To talk about education today means talking about IT and the internet, about bringing those resources to every school child - in and out of Armenia. Yes, even out of Armenia, because the Diaspora, too, needs educational tools that will disseminate and re-enforce our common culture. An online public sphere has already been created, thanks to Groong, and to a whole host of thoughtful, contentful sites, voluntarily maintained from Sweden to Orange County, which have managed to link our dispersed peoples, double and triple our population, and provide an easy, noncommittal, inexpensive avenue for action, without legislation, elections, taxation, transport burdens or costs. These, together with electronic media, offer new resources and new disciplines for the construction of our new modern selves. Together, we have the opportunity to imagine

the world we want for ourselves tomorrow and to create it.

In Armenia, within the framework of the Rural Development Program which we announced at the last Armenia Diaspora Conference, we want to enable comprehensive development in our vulnerable border villages. The borders of our country, today, are dependent on villagers who don't have water or gas, electricity or fertilizer. They also have never seen a cursor and can't speak English.

We have a lot of work to do. Information technologies must play a significant role in our program to bring sustainable rural development to Armenia. For that, we need you. Don't build school buildings or construct water pipes. There are already generous donors who will do that. You help to devise a program that will provide our village students with computer skills.

Second, to enhance our capacity for innovation, we must commit

thought and money to research and development. This is a neglected area of Armenia-Diaspora cooperation. We have dozens of invaluable programs to help our orphans, but not nearly enough to support research and development. Institutionally, the cohesion, the linkages that are required between science, technology, education, economy and society are weak.

I ask you to develop partnerships with our scientists to enhance their ability to innovate. Let's harness our age-old capacity for individual creativity, feed it and channel it back into our society. Some of the best of Armenia's scientific and technological community are here today and they will tell you, as I will, that if we have brain circulation, we won't need to worry about brain drain. If we can support and nurture peer-reviewed, peer-selected researchers and partner them with those with a deep knowledge of the home country, advanced western education,

exposure to western management practice, experience in business, good governance and ethical conduct - we will reap achievements disproportionate to our reality.

Dear Friends,

Armenia has come full circle. Two years ago, we surpassed the production capacity of the Soviet level. I'm sure you've been told by other speakers from Armenia that we've been, for seven years, experiencing double digit economic growth. The prospects are promising and we believe this trend will continue. All this, as I said, was possible, because of our people's commitment, but also because of the domestic and regional stability that we were able to maintain all these years.

Indeed, despite the unresolved conflict that is a part of our reality, we have not and we will not allow that state of no-peace no-war to guide our history. This determination has driven our growth of the last decade. Just as we will not al-

low an unrepentant Turkey to determine our agenda, we will also not limit our choices and options by the lack of a willingness on the part of Azerbaijan to enter into a lasting agreement. They do not want to acknowledge either the past, or the present. As a result, they are not interested in discussing a common future. The mental state of war persists in Azerbaijan. In Armenia and Karabakh, I am proud to say that our outlook is towards the future, towards an eventual peace, towards progress, stability and prosperity.

Dear Friends,

With determination, pragmatism and most of all, unity, we can develop adopt the right policies to identify and utilize new resources for the common good, and to assure our continued and comprehensive development.

If yesterday, we dared to struggle and survive, today, we must dare to prevail. ■

Armenia

ARMENIA
AT WORK

Aram's iron-forged triangle: faith, family, work

by Armen Hakobyan

YEREVAN – “I would say it in the words of our Lord: Labor was the result of Original Sin. When Adam and Eve sinned, God said to the woman, ‘In pain shall you give birth,’ and to Adam he said, ‘You shall earn your bread by the sweat of your brow.’ That is to say, to gain our daily bread, we have to suffer pain, we have to sweat. That’s it. And we have to live with that.

“But there is an important caveat: what we lost with Adam is being restored to us through Christ. In other words, when we turn to Christ, sorrow is taken away from us. Labor is not a torture for us anymore; it can go on with ease, and in some sense it can even become a blessing.”

The insight comes from Aram Antonyan, a blacksmith and the hero of this installment of our “Armenia at Work” series. He was responding to my concluding interview question, about his perceptions of work.

When he talks about these things, it’s clear that Aram is not just spouting fine words. “The words of our Lord” are things that come very naturally to his mind, because it’s the way he really thinks – the way he lives and works, and above all the way he *creates*.

And he does indeed create. Because Aram, who will celebrate his 50th birthday this year, is more than a blacksmith. Those hands now dedicated to the hammer and anvil once held a sculptor’s chisel. Aram was initiated into the art of chiseling at the Panos Terlemezian Art College, and only years later chose to take up blacksmithing as a profession.

Just like in the movie

In ancient Greece they would say that nothing is accidental in this life, nothing happens by chance, and even seeming coincidences have a cause-and-effect explanation.

I think about that as I reflect on my prior failed efforts to find a blacksmith in Yerevan. One forging shop I found had closed and moved away; another shop was nowhere to be found at the address I was given; and when I finally did meet with a blacksmith, he didn’t want to talk to me for some reason.

But maybe it was for the best. Because it led me to Yerevan’s Leningradian Street, to a small house with a strange facade and a signboard reading “Blacksmithing” and “Triangle.” And when I looked through the half-opened door, I understood that here, at last, was not only a blacksmith worth writing about, but one that I *had* to write about!

When you are looking for a blacksmith or a forge in Yerevan, it’s impossible to ignore the name “Triangle.” *The Triangle* is one of Armenia’s favorite movies, which tells the story of the Mkrtych family of blacksmiths from Gyumri. It’s clear that in choosing this name Aram meant to pay tribute both to his favorite movie and to the tradition it portrays.

The forge in the movie got its name from its triangular shape, and Aram says that he tried to follow the same plan when it came to building his own shop: “It was the movie that suggested the idea of naming the forge ‘Triangle.’ Besides, it does have a triangular shape: the ceiling and walls cut in to make a triangle, and in the front part both the glass and stone segments have a triangular shape. Aghasi Ayva-



zyan [the well-known screenwriter of the movie] has not visited this place yet, but Armenia TV’s ‘The Story of a Film’ segment about *The Triangle* movie was shot here.”

The forge is where our interview is taking place, but it’s hard to tell at first glance whether you’re in a blacksmith’s shop or a sculptor’s studio – or whether you’ve wandered into some kind of ethnographic exhibit.

“This is not our workshop,” Aram explains. “We have one, but ‘Triangle’ is something different. We don’t like to call it an ‘office’; this is our ‘art studio,’ if you wish.” He smiles: “Our poets in the times of Toumanian had their *Vernatun*, and this is our *Vernatun*, if you like.”

Everything is neatly ordered and in its place. Numerous pieces testifying to a distinctive creative imagination and the gifted hands of an ironmaster are on display throughout the place. But nothing is obtrusive; nothing hinders the view; everything is a pleasure to observe. On the right of the forge is the bellows, on the left hang the ironmaster die and other instruments. The sledgehammer rests on the anvil. An original chandelier hangs from the ceiling; a pitcher sits on a sinuous, ornamented rest. To left and right are pieces of newly forged railings; right across is a garden lamp in the shape of a tangled vine decorated with iron grape leaves. Next to it, a Venetian lantern; on the walls and table, ancient pots and pans. Then a sideboard, and above – a picture of Ararat, of course. In one corner radio sets from the 1950s sit on handmade stands. In the next corner, right in front of the icon of Christ, is a hand-made candlestick.

Among all this, the first thing that strikes the eye of a newcomer

is the greatcoat of a Soviet army infantryman draped on a hanger made by the ironmaster. And then there’s the modern computer, standing starkly against a backdrop of ancient utensils.

Blacksmith dynasty

Entering a small office of the “Triangle” I notice among some old musical instruments on the wall a 15- to 20-year-old photograph. Aram catches my glance and explains: “Here we are with my brothers and apprentices. In the upper row are the apprentices. And below you can see my brothers, my cousin, and me, with my elder son.”

It’s at this point that I learn that Aram has three brothers. In fact, all four Antonyans are engaged in blacksmith work. This was a great surprise to me. Although it was not possible to talk to all the brothers – they were busy with work – I’m satisfied that the meeting with Aram Antonyan will be something to remember for a long time. I ask him to tell me about himself and his brothers in greater detail.

“There are four of us: the oldest Tigran, then me, then Armen and Arthur. All four are blacksmiths, although this is not a hereditary thing. Our father, Samvel Antonyan, was an architect. By the way, we also are not blacksmiths by training. Two of my brothers are artists, another is a teacher. As for me I am a professional sculptor, graduated from Terlemezian College. We come from Kapan, Syunik, where we still maintain ties with many relatives, and visit them regularly.

Left: Aram Antonyan in front of Triangle. Below left: blacksmithing is a family tradition. Below: some of the work on display. Right: the forge. Photos: Armenian Reporter.



Since Soviet times,” Aram Antonyan says.

Who was his teacher or master in blacksmithing? I ask.

“My masters were my brothers, Tigran and Armen. Later the three of us served as masters for Arthur. As for Tigran and Armen, they learned blacksmithing from the Gyumri masters Gagik and Gevork. Both are still safe and sound, but not in Armenia anymore. And if we are speaking about artistic ironmongering, then we must mention the person who restored those traditions in our country: an artist named Vardan. Now he is in the States; but in the late 80s he actually revitalized this field.”

Judging by his output, I ask, can we say that he finds work in his chosen profession?

“Well, we can say so,” he returns, “but what is more important is that

you work as an artist, that you are in the world of art.”

I ask, “What is your most original work, Aram?”

“Each one is original,” he says. “Especially if it is a special order.”

Then which is his favorite?

“There are many of them,” he reflects, “but maybe the first one. I made a torch. Usually craftspeople like to demonstrate some tricks, and I too wanted to show my mastery, and I made this torch from a single piece of iron. It was quite a laborious work. I wasn’t very pleased with the work back then, but now when I look at it, it catches my eye.” In response to my wish he demonstrates the iron-forged “evidence” of that first step on his 20-year road to mastery.

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ARMENIA T V C O M P A N Y

Watch Armenia TV, the most-watched television station in Armenia.

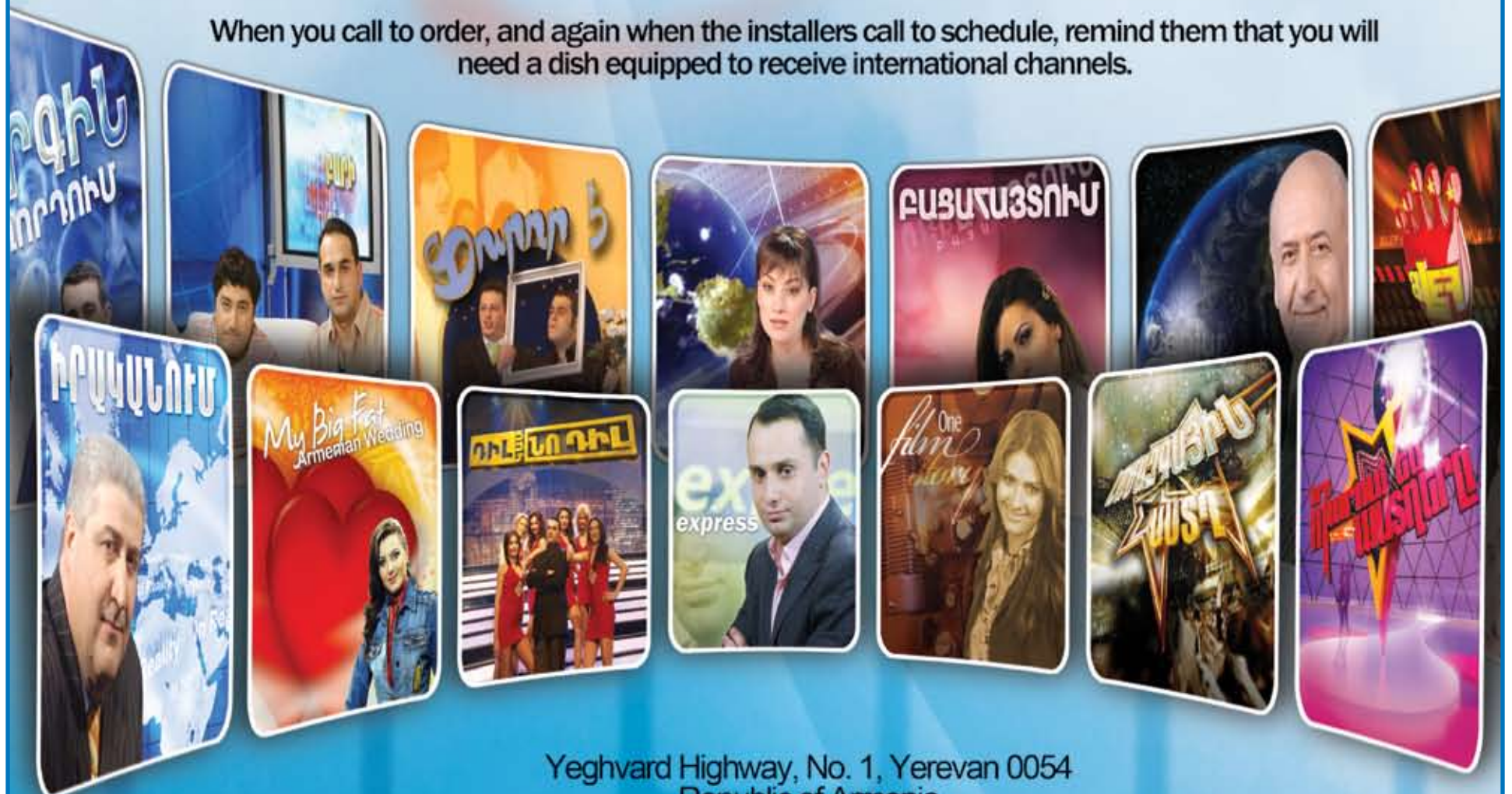
Armenia TV produces and broadcasts over 50 shows, including "Cool Program," "Super Duet," "National Star," "Armenia-Diaspora," "The Century," "Dancing with the Stars," "My Big Fat Armenian Wedding," "Discovery," "Good Morning Armenians," "Yoyo," a children's program, "Deal or No Deal," classic movies and cartoons from Hayfilm, sports programming, and English and Armenian news.

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Armenia

Aram's iron-forged triangle: faith, family, work

Continued from page A6

"The work must have a spirit of blacksmithing in it," Aram says, affixing the torch back on the wall. "Vardan was good at that. He hammered the iron and gave it a shape. It can seem that there is nothing difficult in making a farmer's spade, that it's quite a straightforward tool. Moreover, with modern tools you can 'stamp' and make hundreds of those spades in several minutes. But a blacksmith makes a spade from a whole piece of iron, and when you take it in your hands you can feel that it's the real thing, rather than one of those machine-stamped ones; and you know that you can work with it for long."

He goes on: "In my thinking, the blacksmith has to create something definite from an indefinite mass. And to create it in such a way that it would please the viewer's eye, and give birth to some positive feelings."

Among many decorative elements one notices the dominance of a pomegranate. Aram notes that the pomegranate is one of our most beautiful and typically Armenian fruits: a symbol of fertility and blessing. Besides, he says, "Every artist has his own signature, and we prefer picturing pomegranates." The pomegranate is the Antonyan brothers' trademark, by which their work can be distinguished from others.

However, no symbol is ever chosen without a particular reason. I recall again that the pomegranate is a symbol of fertility. "Do you have you a big family?" I ask.

"Oh, sure. My wife and I, we have five children. The oldest, Ara, is 23 years old." He's the one who followed his father into blacksmithing. "The youngest is in the sixth grade. I have two sons and three daughters. By the way, my brother Tigran is also a father of five children, as well as Armen. Only our younger brother Arthur has just three," Aram says; then he adds: "We are a Christian family. What do I mean? I mean Christian in the true sense of the word."

And what meaning does he put into that word?

"That one should be a Christian not only in name, but by one's deeds. Isn't that so?" he asks, and immediately answers: "It is."

"It's not a philosophy," he continues; "it is the truth. The truth is that today we call ourselves Christians, but we do not involve ourselves in the deeds of Christ. You can stop any Armenian in the street today and ask him whether he is a Christian, and the answer will be Yes. Ask whether he loves Christ, and the answer will be Yes. But ask him whether he follows Christ's commandments, his words, and the answer will be No. But Christ said: 'Whoever performs my commands, he is the one who loves me.' You have to believe with your heart and soul."

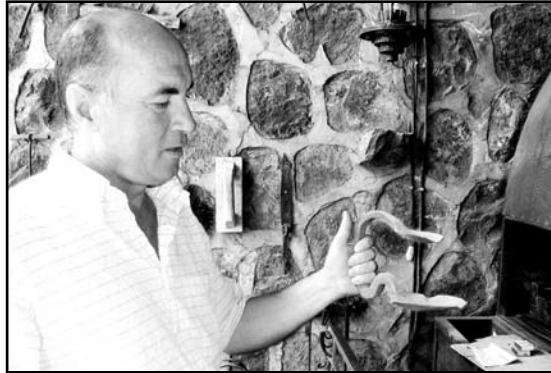
The greatest difficulty

Our conversation with Aram is interrupted by the visit of a client: a big man of 35 to 40 years, a fashion interior magazine tucked under his arm. He has seen a picture of a grand, ornamented mirror, and he wants to have a similar one. "Do you already have a house or a room ready for the installation?" the master asks, and when he gets a negative answer he offers some friendly advice: finish the interior work first, and then they can examine the room together and decide what to do to decorate the mirror and the room in general.

Taking the reasonable advice, the client leaves, and I asked Aram what kind of orders he usually takes. As it turned out there are no limitations: people order all kinds of things: decorative bars, railings, gates, sometimes even house furniture, torches, furniture accessories, beds, cradles, and so on.

"You can divide clients into three groups," Aram says. "There are people who understand and appreciate blacksmithing and order something for their pleasure, rather than for pleasing somebody else, or just for prestige. Then there are people who do not understand and do it for show, or out of certain ambitions. And there are also some people who do have some money as in the previous group, and have seen beautiful things and decorations in other places or in the houses of their friends or competitors, and they ask themselves: Why can't we have the same?"

It's worth mentioning here that there are not many working blacksmiths in Yerevan. And rarer still are masters like the Antonyans, who are engaged in artistic ironworking. For them, each piece of handwork



Aram Antonyan shows off his first and favorite work, a torch made from a single piece of iron.

Photo: Armenian Reporter.

is precious, and the price for commissioned pieces is naturally high. For example, one square meter of a decorative window bar would start at around \$40 to \$50. Naturally, the more elaborate and artistic the work, the higher its price.

What is the most difficult thing in your profession? I ask Aram.

"The most difficult thing in our profession is dealing with a client who does not understand blacksmithing," he says. "This is really the most difficult thing. It is difficult because they do not value your work. I am not talking about the financial aspect; I mean that they do not appreciate the work as it is. There are some who say: This is just a piece of iron. But I try to explain them, this is iron only before going into the forge; but after emerging from the forge, iron in the hands of master becomes a forged piece. It is not correct to call it 'iron' anymore. Some people do not understand this, and it is not very pleasant to deal with such people."

The most important thing in the world

In Master Aram's philosophy, the most important and crucial thing in the world is belief in God. "And to believe in God means to obey to his words," he explains.

"There has to be a divine nature in man, as man was created in the image and likeness of God," the master says.

And on the subject of human qualities, he notes: "I love simplicity. I do not like baseness. I love openness. I don't like baseness in any of its manifestations: lying, lechery, meanness. It's good that the human being is human. You know why? Because God created man in his image; but we do not accept it completely: we under-

value it - we do not treat each other kindly, because we do not understand why we have been created."

A little bit later, returning to my question on the meaning of work, he summarizes his own philosophy: "To work and to live: These two things are always together. There is one important thing I often think about and observe, but only recently the meaning of it has crystallized for me. In the sense of correlating work and life, they live the right way in European countries. But we Armenians do not live the right way. We live to work. But these are things that we have to distinguish."

"We do not have to live for the sake of work, but we have to work for the sake of living. You understand me, don't you?" he asks, and my expression suggests he should go on. "There are men who live, work, and do not enjoy. But there are people who work and enjoy. For example, in Europe they do work and enjoy life. But Armenians work and work - this is for my child, this is for this, this is for that, etcetera. That is to say: They live to work. I think this is not right. Although there are certain circumstances that would make us behave like that, it can be an excuse for only a limited period of time. Now, for instance, people are finally starting to breathe little by little. They used to live for the sake of work; but some people are now started to work for the sake of living."

"Not the same Yerevan anymore"

Do you like Yerevan, Aram? I ask him.

"Today's Yerevan I do not like; no. Once there was another Yerevan. But today's Yerevan I do not like."

What has changed?

"Well, many things have changed. Fake things that don't mesh well with each other are the norm."

Fake things in the city? Or in people? I ask.

"It has to change in people first to change in the city. If nothing changes in your inner self, nothing will change in your speech, in your appearance. Everything comes from inside. I do not see any architecture. I could have used some other plaster for this wall, couldn't I? But I chose to use a plaster made of lime and straw. But others do the standard thing and call it Euro-restoration. There is no such thing as Euro-restoration. There's good restoration, good work. And this good work they compare with European standards. This is a standard they compare with."

Aram expands on his relationship with the capital city. "I am a 'city guy,' born and raised on Abovian Street. As in the famous song, 'I was born here, I grew up here, I drank this cool water. . . . I used to love Yerevan, but now I don't like it anymore. I don't like it because it has changed, and it has not changed for the better - you know what I mean? There used to be fine buildings here. Everybody would say: 'This is a dump, this is a rat hole, let's destroy it' - and they did destroy it. But there were good things as well, things which they could keep. On Pushkin Street, for example, it brought tears to my eyes to see them pull down those buildings. They were amazing buildings, with excellent architecture. Meanwhile, in all these modern buildings there is a certain falsity."

Such are the thoughtful insights of Aram Antonyan: blacksmith, sculptor, Armenian, citizen of Yerevan.

We say goodbye to each other, and Aram goes back to his work. With his permission, I wander around the Antonyan brothers' "Triangle" for a little while longer, and depart from it with a greater feeling of warmth deep in my heart. I leave with a hope that I will meet Aram again - and why not? After all, Yerevan isn't exactly the biggest city in the world.

But most of all, I hope and wish to see more Armenians like Aram.

As for the city of Yerevan, we will come back to that theme soon enough. ☞

Karabakh election offers voters a real choice

Masis Mayilian's candidacy is a challenge not only to the ruling elite but also to Karabakh's young democracy

by Tatul Hakobyan

STEPANAKERT - All the elections held in Nagorno-Karabakh, including the three presidential elections to date, have been free and fair. This is the assessment of international observers that monitored them and many Armenian analysts and political scientists. It is also true, however, that voters did not have serious alternatives in these elections, the exception being the most recent municipal election, in which an opposition candidate was elected mayor of Stepanakert, defeating a pro-government nominee.

The presidency was established in Nagorno-Karabakh in 1994. On December 21, the Karabakh parliament voted to institute the presidential system, and on December 22, it elected Robert Kocharian president in a secret ballot. The vote was 50 in favor, 2 opposed, and 1 abstention. Prior to that and starting on August 15, 1992, Mr. Kocharian had served as president of the State Defense Committee.

On November 24, 1996, Karabakh held its first popular election for president. Mr. Kocharian received 89 percent of the vote. His opponents were Boris Arushanian, who had been a senior member of the State Defense Committee and served in other official positions, and the local Communist Party leader Hrant Melkumian.

A few months later, the president of Armenia, Levon Ter-Petrosian, invited Mr. Kocharian to Yerevan and offered him the post of prime minister of Armenia, which he accepted. On September 1, 1997, Karabakh held an early presidential election. Foreign Minister Arkady

Ghoukassian was elected with 90 percent of the vote. His opponents were Mr. Arushanian and Professor Artur Tovmasian of Artsakh State University.

On August 11, 2002, the third presidential election took place. Mr. Ghoukassian was reelected with 89 percent of the vote. His opponents, Albert Ghazarian and Grigori Afanasian, were not very well known.

Analysts believe that the upcoming July 19 election will offer voters a meaningful choice. There are five candidates. The focus is on two of them: Former head of the state security apparatus Bako Sahakian, and former deputy foreign minister Masis Mayilian. Mr. Sahakian has a greater chance of being elected as he is the "unity candidate" of the ruling group, enjoying the support of the main political parties, including leaders of the parliamentary opposition in Karabakh. The resources of the state are working in his favor and against Mr. Mayilian.

On July 3 in Yerevan, President Ghoukassian announced that he supports Mr. Sahakian's candidacy.

"The most worthy candidate is Sahakian. I connect the future of Karabakh with that name. I am certain that he can secure the continuation of the course of democratization and the building of a country that corresponds to European values. He is a man who can gather the people of Karabakh around him for the resolution of the major problems and all issues on the agenda today."

In Mr. Ghoukassian's view, the conditions are ideal for elections in Karabakh. Elections in Karabakh are "the best in the [post-Soviet] Commonwealth of Independent States," he said. "Elections in Karabakh will be free, fair, and transparent. I am certain that the most worthy will prevail. And I see that worthy person."

Stepan Safarian, a member of Armenia's National Assembly and an analyst at the Armenian Center for National and International Studies, criticized Mr. Ghoukassian. He said that Karabakh's president can support a candidate but should be careful in his statements: "Keeping in mind the state of the political sys-

tem that exists in countries like ours, the incumbent president should all the same abstain from open intervention in the political process."

President Kocharian of Armenia has not publicly supported any candidate. On July 10, Garnik Isagulian, a presidential advisor on national security matters, supported Mr. Sahakian and criticized Mr. Mayilian in a press conference.

According to a high-ranking source in Armenia's government, there was no consensus in Armenia's ruling circles about a successor to Mr. Ghoukassian. Mr. Mayilian announced his candidacy on the last possible day for filing nomination papers. Karabakh's top officials promptly criticized him for doing so and began trying to persuade their counterparts in Armenia that Mr. Sahakian was the only worthy candidate.

Mr. Mayilian, who has held various positions in Karabakh's Foreign Ministry since 1993, says, "The authorities started using ad-

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Armenia

For Azerbaijan, the Council of Europe is a podium for anti-Armenian propaganda

by **Tatul Hakobyan**

STRASBOURG – Armenia's foreign minister has submitted a formal letter of protest to the secretary general of the Council of Europe in response to unfavorable statements made by the Secretariat over the last two weeks regarding presidential elections in Nagorno-Karabakh slated for July 19. Vartan Oskanian made this announcement during a joint press conference with Amb. Per Sjogren, head of the Council of Europe's Ago Monitoring group.

When asked by the *Armenian Reporter* what diplomatic measures Armenia is undertaking to ensure that European bureaucrats refrain from such statements, Mr. Oskanian said, "Lately, the secretary general of the Council of Europe has made statements, carelessly and unconsciously, or perhaps intentionally, which do not correspond with reality. We have presented a written letter of protest. I have put this issue before the ambassadors that are part of the Ago group and requested that they, on my behalf relay this message to the secretary general. Terry Davis' announcements are unacceptable and in my estimation are careless and do not correspond to today's terminology nor to the current process."

Mr. Oskanian added that official Yerevan always reacts to statements made by officials at the Council of Europe or any other organization which do not correspond to reality, are not in tune with the spirit and letter of the process, or are inaccurate, regardless of who is making the statement.

On June 25 in Strasbourg, in response to the *Armenian Reporter's* request for comment on the upcoming presidential elections in Nagorno-Karabakh, Mr. Davis said, "Nagorno Karabakh is not recognized internationally; it is not regarded as a separate recognized state; and the so-called elections will not have affect." Asked how the Kosovo case will impact Nagorno-Karabakh, the secretary general stressed: "I will be surprised if the people of Nagorno-Karabakh will not try to use the decision about Kosovo. People



AGO monitoring group head Amb. Per Sjogren and Foreign Minister Vartan Oskanian at Armenia's Foreign Ministry. Photo: Photolure.

in Nagorno-Karabakh will try to use the situation in Kosovo as a precedent, but I think they will be disappointed." Mr. Davis labeled as separatist regimes the governments of the four unrecognized republics of the former Soviet Union – Nagorno-Karabakh, Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Transnistria.

Before that, in an interview to A1+, Mr. Davis stated: "Legally, Nagorno-Karabakh is seen as an occupied territory. Legally, Nagorno-Karabakh is part of Azerbaijan. I support the territorial integrity of all [Council of Europe] member countries. Nagorno-Karabakh is not part of Armenia."

I have on several occasions reported on the sessions of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) and have the impression that Azerbaijan became a member of the Council of Europe not to fulfil this European organization's requirements or to join international agreements or conventions. Nor are they interested in enshrining European standards or values within their country. Rather their objective is to spout anti-Armenia and anti-Karabakh rhetoric.

In this respect, it isn't Baku's anti-Armenian hysteria that is incomprehensible; what's surprising is the Armenian delegation's passivity. This assessment refers not only to PACE's June 25-29 session, nor only to this particular delegation, which was comprised of only

two instead of the normal four members of parliament. (Owing to the National Assembly elections, Armenia's delegation to PACE was not finalized at the time.)

One of the themes to be discussed at this session was the observation of the parliamentary elections in Armenia. Other themes dealt indirectly with Armenia; but they were themes about which the members of the Armenian delegation had the right to speak. For example, "Promotion by Council of Europe member states of an international moratorium on the death penalty." A PACE resolution urged the international community, particularly European countries, to eliminate the death penalty. In a separate article in the resolution, unrecognized territories within the CIS – Abkhazia, South Ossetia, and Transnistria – were also called upon to eliminate the death penalty. Nagorno-Karabakh was not mentioned in this resolution because it has long ago eliminated capital punishment. This was an opportunity for our delegates, ARF member Armen Roustamian and the Republican Party's Hermine Naghdalian to underscore that Karabakh, notwithstanding its treatment by the international community, is moving toward democratization with a value system that the Council of Europe espouses.

Over the course of five days, Armenia's two delegates signed up to

take the floor only twice and in the end didn't speak at all. Azerbaijan's delegation signed up 13 times, and almost all of their interventions began and ended with anti-Armenian rhetoric and accusations. When the Greek delegate Nikolaos Dendias presented a report on the situation of refugees and displaced persons in the Balkans, four Azerbaijani delegates immediately registered to speak.

Here is a part of Raphael Housein's speech which remained unanswered: "Azerbaijan is a country that has suffered most, not only in Europe but in the world, from this problem. Azerbaijan with its population of 8 million people has nearly 1 million refugees and displaced persons. Repeating is not pleasant and I realise that rehearsing these known statistics is boring the Council of Europe, but living the life of a refugee or displaced person over 15 years is surely more oppressive than being disturbed by rehearsing the same word and figure. . . . Armenia, which exposed 1 million Azerbaijani citizens to such tragedy, nevertheless remains a member of the Council of Europe and goes unpunished. That state needs sanctions or another form of punishment."

There is no need for Armenia's delegates to get involved in a back-and-forth debate. It is however possible to declare from the podium that as a result of the Karabakh conflict, yes, more than a million people were displaced from their places of permanent residence, and to add that of those almost 750,000 were Azerbaijanis and close to 500,000 were Armenians. It is important to convey that the issue of displaced persons did not just appear on its own; rather, Azerbaijan through unbridled aggression tried to find a solution to the Karabakh issue through war. It lost the war and in turn has also lost the neighbouring territories of Nagorno-Karabakh, which do not comprise 20 percent as they insist but only 7 percent of Azerbaijan overall. It is imperative to continually stress that Azerbaijan today continues to threaten war although, when it became a member of the Council

of Europe in 2001 with Armenia, it did so with a commitment to find a solution through a peaceful settlement.

New lies

The Azerbaijanis, who in the past put into circulation the "One million refugees and 20 percent of territory" legend, today spread new lies in various European organizations.

Delegate Ganira Pashayeva in her speech reiterated, "Merely 70 years ago, Azerbaijanis constituted more than 40 percent of the population of Armenia, but today not a single Azerbaijani resides there." This is a falsification that did not receive a response from the Armenian side.

When there was a discussion about combating anti-Semitism in Europe, delegates spoke about the Holocaust as the first genocide in human history and neither of the two Armenian delegates spoke. In their place, three Azerbaijanis and one delegate from Turkey made remarks. The leader of the Azerbaijani delegation to PACE, Samed Seyidov, spoke about Azerbaijan as though it was the most tolerant country in the world not only toward its Jewish citizens but toward all its national minorities. It was only one of the Greek delegates who, in his speech, reminded everyone in passing that the Armenians at the turn of the twentieth century were victims of Genocide; to this the Turks retaliated vehemently, saying that it was unacceptable to make comparisons to the "annihilation of 6 million Jews to tragic events in history."

In the Council of Europe, Azerbaijani propaganda is not limited to speeches. They spread lies through thousands of copies of letters. During this session, they distributed a letter, "The serious threats arising from Armenia's invasive plans towards the Autonomous Republic of Nakhichevan of Azerbaijan and responsibility of the Council of Europe." In the letter they deny the destruction of thousands of stone crosses in Jugha. ❏

Karabakh election offers voters a real choice

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ministrative resources and power structures a few months before the campaign [officially] started. This is black propaganda against our country and it pains me. They tried to persuade people that everything is predetermined. In such circumstances, it is difficult for us to have free and transparent elections, which always leaves a good impression abroad. We have said over and over that as a more democratic country, we cannot be annexed to unfree Azerbaijan."

He insists that administrative measures are being taken to undermine his candidacy. "They make it difficult for people to come to our rallies. But that has the opposite effect," he says.

David Babayan, an aide to President Ghoukassian, insists that no administrative or other leverage is being used against any candidate. "To raise his popularity, Mayilian wants to look like a fighter. Few people show up for his rallies because whatever needed to be said

has already been said. Mayilian's campaign started six months ago. Many people go to Sahakian's rallies because they want to meet the likely next president."

Mr. Sahakian's supporters say they have the advantage that all of the main political groups in Karabakh support him as their unified candidate. The Artsakh Democratic Party, has the biggest delegation in parliament; the party leader Ashot Ghulian is the speaker of parliament. The party's Vania Avanesian, a member of parliament, is running for president. But his party is supporting Mr. Sahakian, who is not affiliated with any party.

Mr. Sahakian also enjoys the support of the second largest party in parliament, Free Homeland, and of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF), which has for the last ten years been considered to be in opposition to President Ghoukassian – although the foreign minister and other ministers are members of the ARF. Some analysts believe the unity of all parties is a good thing. Others consider it absurd.

The other two presidential candidates are parliament member Armen Abgarian and Communist Party leader Hrant Melkumian. The latter works in the government but claims to represent the only true opposition party in Karabakh. Oddly, he occasionally appears at Mr. Sahakian's rallies. Mr. Abgarian is a very well known figure in Karabakh. For eight years from 1992 he served as a senior logistics official in the Karabakh army. He is not campaigning.

Sergey Minasyan of the Caucasus Media Institute believes the elections offer voters a real choice. If Mr. Sahakian is the unified candidate, then Mr. Mayilian is the alternative.

"Of course, it is possible to say there's no choice because all candidates are from the ruling circles. But what's happening with Mayilian, who used to be part of the political elite, shows that the elite is not monolithic; I don't consider that a bad thing. This opens the door for real choices in the next election," he said.

Masis Mayilian campaigning. Photo: KarabakhOpen.com



Mr. Minassian and Mr. Safarian of ACNIS say that Mr. Mayilian faces almost impossible odds. But they consider his willingness to enter the fray and fight hard a positive development. This is a case of democracy being built from the inside and not imposed from the outside.

Opinion polls also show that Mr. Sahakian has the support of most

voters. Aharon Adibekian of Yerevan's Sociometre Center says that Mr. Sahakian is likely to win 80 percent of the vote, with 15 percent going to Mr. Mayilian. Mr. Mayilian's campaign considers the poll unreliable. The polling was done with the youth organization of the Artsakh Freedom Fighters' Association, which is actively supporting Mr. Sahakian's candidacy. ❏

Editorial

the armenian
reporter

One nation across all divides

The earthly remains of Alex and Marie Manoogian were moved this week from Detroit to Armenia so that they may be reinterred at Holy Etchmiadzin next week.

The generosity of the Manoogians is legendary. The sheer amount of money they donated over their lifetimes is but one indication of their charity. The widely cited estimate is \$90 million; this is probably an understatement because it adds sums from different periods; a million 1960 dollars are the equivalent of well over six million 2007 dollars.

But numbers tell only part of the story. It is an important story that remains very relevant today.

Many of the survivors of the Armenian Genocide identified with the village, town, or region from which they and their families were driven. They formed compatriotic societies that brought the survivors back together. Eventually, many of these societies compiled their local histories, traditions, and remembrances into thick volumes that are the jewels of our collective memory.

The vision of Alex and Marie Manoogian, however, was pan-Armenian. They saw one nation across all divides. In his organizational leadership and in his charitable giving, Alex Manoogian, a native of Smyrna, saw Armenians from Adana or Akhalkalaki, from Karabakh or Kharpert, from Zeitun or Zangezur as part of one great Armenian nation. Nor did it matter to him where these Armenians now lived: across the globe, Armenians were one nation, indivisible.

The Armenian General Benevolent Union, founded one hundred years ago by another great Armenian, Boghos Nubar, became the perfect venue for Alex Manoogian's visionary leadership. And the evidence is everywhere to be seen: the Alex and Marie Manoogian School in Southfield, Mich.; the Marie Manoogian Center in Buenos Aires, Argentina; the Alex Manoogian School in Montevideo, Uruguay; the Marie Manoogian School in Los Angeles, Calif.; the Alex Manoogian School in Montreal; the Alex Manoogian Center in Beirut, Lebanon; the Alex Manoogian Center in Zahleh, Lebanon; the Marie Manoogian School in Tehran, Iran – all under the auspices of the AGBU.

Then there is the Armenian Community Center in Almelo, Holland; the Alex and Marie Manoogian Seminary in Jerusalem; the Alex and Marie Manoogian Museum in Etchmiadzin; the Alex and Marie Manoogian School in Boca Raton, Fla., and the Alex and Marie Manoogian Cultural Center in Miami.

Tens of thousands of Armenian children and young adults, most with no ties with or knowledge of the AGBU, were educated in these schools – and others supported by the AGBU or by the Manoogians directly – and are educated there today.

The Manoogians' commitment to raising generations of Armenians across all boundaries went beyond their enormous role in the AGBU. At the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, there's the Alex Manoogian chair in Modern Armenian History and the Marie Manoogian chair in Modern Armenian Language and Literature. The Manoogians also contributed substantially to Armenian studies programs and chairs at UCLA, Columbia University in New York, New York University, the University of Massachusetts, Boston University, the University of Leiden, Holland, the University of California, Berkeley, the University of Southern California, and Bentley College in Waltham, Mass.

They also established the AGBU Alex and Marie Manoogian Cultural Fund in 1968. It has supported the publication and translation of many scholarly and literary works, cultural activities, and has provided assistance to needy Armenian intellectuals and educators throughout the world.

The Manoogians supported the church. They gave to Holy Etchmiadzin; they gave to the Saint Vartan Cathedral and to Diocesan Endowment Fund in New York; they gave to Saint John's Armenian Church and cultural complex in Southfield, Mich. They also gave to the Mekhitarist Monasteries in Vienna and Venice.

The Manoogian legacy continues through a healthy and dynamic AGBU, through the ongoing work of their foundations, through the continued operation of the institutions they endowed, and through their family: their daughter Louise and their son Richard and their grandchildren. In a larger sense, their legacy continues through the survival and dynamism of the Armenian nation.

Louise Manoogian Simone navigated the formidable organization that is the AGBU in the crucial years after the earthquake in Armenia. Even as the organization responded in a fulsome manner to the humanitarian needs that emerged from the earthquake and the economic collapse of the early years of Armenian independence, Ms. Manoogian Simone had the vision to endow the American University of Armenia. Beyond education, the AGBU addressed spiritual needs through the church and by investing in Armenia's cultural life. Meanwhile, the AGBU continued to address the needs of the diaspora.

Although Ms. Simone in 2002 relinquished many of her duties at the AGBU, she continues to be an active supporter and participant in building the future of the Armenian nation.

Alex and Marie Manoogian's life's work, their vision, and their leadership have inspired many others to follow in their footsteps to the best of their abilities. Not least among them are the next generations of Manoogians.

In 1996, when Alex Manoogian died, the Catholicos of All Armenians flew to Detroit to officiate at his funeral. Now the remains of the Manoogians are in Armenia. They will lie in state at the Monastery of Saint Gayane until July 17, after which they will be reinterred on the hallowed grounds of Holy Etchmiadzin, in the shadows of the Mother Cathedral, and in sight of the museum they sponsored.

May they rest in peace in the soil they tilled throughout their lives. ☩

COMMENTARY

Letters



Copper tailing being dumped into the river at Aghtala village.

Photo: Narine Kirakosyan.

No mining in Teghut

Sir:

Thank you for bringing attention to the current challenges and choices which will impact Armenia's environmental integrity long into the future. The June 23 and July 7 articles about the nation's environmental policies which allow for destructive mining practices and the newly released study on illegal logging highlight important issues that should be of concern to everyone who cares about the survival of the culture, land, and people of Armenia.

Armenia is a very special place for many reasons, and I would like to bring to your attention a few more that may be less well known. Located at the convergence of 3 major biogeographic regions, Armenia has within it seven of the world's nine climate zones. Although it consists of only 29,000 square kilometers, amounting to 0.05 percent of the land mass of the northern hemisphere, it is home to 40 percent of all landscape types found there.

As a result, Armenia has enormous biological diversity, including 8,800 plant species, half of which are at risk of extinction; 13 species and 360 varieties of wheat, which was first cultivated there ten thousand years ago; 260 species of trees and bushes; 17,500 invertebrate and 500 vertebrate species of animals, of which 346 species are birds (of the 500 vertebrate species, 300 are rare or declining, and 18 are at risk of extinction); and one-third of the 156 reptile species found in the former Soviet Union.

Today, Armenia's forest cover is at its lowest point in history, estimated to be at less than 8 percent of its territory. The loss of forests is caused by poverty and unemployment, a lack of alternate fuel sources, legal and illegal commercial cutting and export of wood, and improper management. Forests perform important environmental and socioeconomic functions, and when they disappear, long-term consequences result, such as erosion, flooding, landslides, climate extremes, loss of water supply, reduction of topsoil fertility, loss of plant and animal biodiversity, and severe air pollution. The harsh reality is that all of Armenia's forests may be gone in as little as 20 years at the current rate of deforestation, leading to irreversible environmental damage.

In the small agrarian village of Teghut in northern Armenia, the Armenian Copper Program, a foreign-owned company, is seeking final approval from the government to begin clear cutting as much as 1,500 acres

(the size of 1,125 American football fields) of forest in preparation for an enormous open-pit strip mining operation in search of copper and molybdenum ore. The ore will be separated from the soil by adding various toxic chemical compounds to it. The resulting sludge is planned to be dumped in a nearby pristine gorge in Shnogh village.

Given the government's history of being unable to monitor and enforce protection of the environment, it is highly likely that the toxins and heavy metals will leach into the ground and nearby river, creating a permanent death zone in the area and threatening the water quality for people downstream. Witness the damage being done by the copper tailing dump in Aghtala village, or the unfiltered toxins belching from the smelter in Alaverdi, or the many other examples of damage being done to the land and health of Armenians by the mining industry, as documented in the new film *Poisoning for Profit* produced by Vem Media Arts.

The need for economic development in Armenia, where nearly half the population lives below the poverty line, is enormous. But should economic growth be blindly pursued regardless of the long-term cost and damage that will be inflicted on the land and the health of the people?

Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., once stated, "People make the argument that the time has come in our nation where we have to choose between the environment on one hand and economic prosperity on the other, and that is a false choice. In 100 percent of the situations, good environmental policy is identical to good economic policy. . . . Some industries want us to treat the planet like it is a business in liquidation, to convert our natural resources to cash as quickly as possible, to have a few years of pollution-based prosperity.

"We can generate an instantaneous cash flow and the illusion of a prosperous economy, but our children are going to pay for our joy ride, and they are going to pay for it with denuded landscapes, poor health, and huge cleanup costs. . . . Pollution is deficit spending. It's a way of loading the costs of our prosperity and our profits on the backs of our children."

If final approval is given to proceed with this mine, eventually the ore will be depleted, and the jobs it created will be gone. The profits will be exported, and left behind will be the legacy of a poisoned landscape unsuitable for agricultural production, the permanent loss of innumerable habitats that sup-

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An independent newspaper, published by CS Media Enterprises LLC

Gerard L. Cafesjian, President and CEO

Publisher Sylva A. Boghossian

Office manager Lisa Kopooshian

Western U.S. operations manager Nyree Derderian

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Armenian Reporter
P.O. Box 129
Paramus, N.J. 07652

The views expressed, except in the editorial, are not necessarily those of the publishers.

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Commentary

Toward the renewal of the Armenian Church

by Catholicos Aram I

The renewal of the Armenian Church is so complex in nature and so extensive in scope that it is not possible to deal with it properly within the framework of a pastoral letter. By raising questions pertaining to the subject, I intend to remind us of the pivotal importance of renewal; by sharing a few thoughts with our youth, I intend to challenge them to engage in this process through reflection and discussion.

The church is essentially a community of faith built on Jesus Christ. The church is not a reality "out there" – it does not exist *outside* of our lives, our thoughts, or our concerns. We are the church: the people of God united in Christ, joined together with the bond of love, and sustained by a common hope and vision.

The prevailing misconception that the church is a mere institution needs to be corrected. The institutional expression of the church must not be confused with its nature; its essence must not be altered by its form. In the church, the divine and the human, the ecclesial and the societal, the eternal and the timely, the transcendent and the imminent embrace each other. However, the qualitative difference between the divine and the human dimensions need be clearly distinguished.

As we seek to renew the Armenian Church in a new global context, I believe we must consider the following:

(1) The Armenian Church is the people's church. This reality is articulated in all areas of the church's life. The concept of a "national church" has different connotations in different settings; but in the Armenian Church it denotes the intimate interaction between church and people. Through its spiritual, educational, social, and humanitarian activities the Armenian Church is so deeply involved in the daily life of the people that it is impossible to draw a line of demarcation between "church" and "people." Our church's living presence and transforming role permeate the entire life of the nation, as a source of spiritual renewal, richness, and strength both for the church and the nation.

However, excessive emphasis on the national character of the church may expose it to the blunt intervention of state or political structures into internal church affairs. Such behavior weakens the church's strength, undermines its authority, and jeopardizes its integrity.

(2) A church with a multi-faceted mission. In its mission our church embraces most of the dimensions of the community's life. Not only did the church invent the Armenian alphabet, it has also played a significant part in enriching the nation's culture. Not only has the church defended the rights of its people for justice and freedom, it has also assumed a role in pursuing the Armenian cause. Not only has the church emphasized the vital importance of social justice and humanitarian aid, it has also established welfare institutions, orphanages, and hospitals. Not only has the church promoted educational values,

His Holiness Aram I is the Catholicos of the Great House of Cilicia, in Antelias, Lebanon. This essay is part of Catholicos Aram's *Dialogue with the Youth* series.

it has also established large networks of community schools.

Our church must preserve the multi-dimensional, comprehensive nature of its mission. But in view of the growing and diversifying challenges of our communities, the church is called, first, to review its traditional methodologies in order to make its witness more efficient and relevant; and second, it is called to clearly spell out its priorities, laying a particular emphasis on the spiritual and moral aspects of its witness.

(3) A participatory church. One of the features of our church is the full participation of the people in the church's total life. Men and women, the disabled and the youth – people from all walks of life, without any discrimination – contribute in one way or another, on a larger or smaller scale, to the witness of the church. The Armenian Church is not strictly a clerical church: it is open to the laity, which takes an active part in almost all aspects of the church's life and mission – including its decision-making processes – often with a determinative voice.

The people-based character of the church must be further enhanced. However, the nature and limits of participation by the laity in church matters needs to be clearly defined. Otherwise, it may eventually weaken the church's spiritual character, ecclesial integrity, and prophetic vocation. The Armenian Church both in Armenia and the diaspora must be extremely attentive to this potential danger during a period when secular interests and values are becoming increasingly dominant in the life of societies.

(4) The church as an identity marker. Religion is a strong identity marker in many societies; in Christianity, the inter-relation of faith and culture has profound implications. Due to its ecclesiological self-understanding and historical circumstances, the Armenian Church has become a major player in nation-building. It has become a powerful promoter of national values and aspirations.

Today, particularly in the diaspora, community life revolves around the church, which maintains cultural and educational roles, is a custodian of national values and traditions, and plays an instrumental part in forming, preserving, and enhancing the Armenian identity. In globalized societies – particularly in the West, where all sorts of distinctions and specificities are disappearing – this unique role of the church has become especially crucial.

Guidelines for renewal

All of these considerations must be taken into account in our definition of renewal in the Armenian Church. Abrupt decisions and arbitrary changes will create further confusion. Change is not always constructive: it can distort the identity of the church and endanger its integrity.

So what guidelines should be established to lead the church in its renewal efforts? In this regard I would like to make a few observations.

(a) Blending tradition and modernity. Generally, people think that tradition and modernity are in conflict. In my view, they complement each other. For some, tradition means old, outdated, referring to the past and with no relevance to the present. This is a misconception. Tradition is always alive in

the self-understanding and self-expression of a community, articulated through its values, aspirations, and way of life.

For some, modernity means rejecting the old and turning to the new. Again, this is a misunderstanding. Modernity signifies the human effort to keep pace with changing times and realities. We cannot build and sustain community without tradition. It is equally true that we cannot make a community credible, viable, and an integral part of modern societies without opening its traditions and values to new conditions and challenges.

A critical and creative interaction between tradition and modernity is imperative. We must avoid extremes: neither blindly reject conservatism, nor uncritically embrace modernism. Through a critical dialogue, tradition and modernity strengthen and challenge each other. We must develop new approaches and outlooks in dealing with our church traditions. We must keep the essence and specificity of the ancient traditions, while making them more responsive to new concerns and expectations. Adapting the church to new times is a critical and arduous task requiring a clear strategy, new methodology, and long-term planning.

(b) Strengthening the relation between the local and the global. The church is both a local and a global reality, and these dimensions condition each other. Our church lives in different local contexts; it is also a global church exposed to global changes and a multitude of influences.

Today, in many parts of the world, including Armenia, our church displays a picture of distorted traditions, disconnected practices, and disoriented perceptions almost in all spheres of its life. To respond to the changing circumstances and expectations of the people, our dioceses and even some parishes have already engaged in "reformation." But the continuation of these hasty changes could lead the church to even greater disintegration.

The trend towards localization on the one hand, and the lack of meaningful interaction between the global and the local on the other hand, may eventually endanger the very identity and the wholeness of our church.

In the renewal process the basic traditions, teachings, and practices of the church must be maintained – namely those elements that ensure the continuity, unity, and specificity of the Armenian Church. At the same time, our church must have the courage to adapt its traditions to local conditions and needs.

(c) Making the church's interaction with its environment more dynamic and creative. Aside from its attachment to values, traditions, and dreams, the survival of a community in a given society is determined by its openness and relevance. A self-centered, introverted community cannot survive. Interaction and interdependence, interconnection and inter-penetration, brought about by globalization, are hallmarks of modern societies.

The Armenian Church cannot organize itself, reactivate its missionary outreach, or revitalize its community life as a self-centered, self-sufficient institution. It must engage in a meaningful dialogue with its environment. It must constantly grapple with issues and challenges facing the society in which it is called to give witness to the Gospel. Besides inter-church collaboration, inter-faith dia-



His Holiness Aram I.

logue, which has become a major feature of modern societies, cannot be ignored by the Armenian Church. Neither can our church ignore socio-ethical issues facing modern societies. These factors also affect the self-understanding and self-fulfillment of our church.

A responsive church

These are a few observations that need to be given due consideration in the quest for renewal of the Armenian Church.

Ours is one of the ancient churches of Christendom. It must know how to remain young; it must not become a petrified institution, but a church for the 21st century. Our church must be in tune with its time. Its theology must become more intelligible, its liturgy more attractive, its clergy more educated, its mission more evangelistic, its education more spiritual, its service more effective, and its message more prophetic. It must reach the unreachable and even the unreachable. I would not call this being a "progressive" or "modern" church, but rather a *responsive* church. (I touch on similar issues in a new book, *For a Church Beyond its Walls*, Antelias, 2007.)

Our church faces challenges related both to its internal life and to its relation with its environment. These problems may soon become intractable if we do not wrestle with them responsibly. Cosmetic approaches, provisional arrangements, and superficial changes will not ensure the renewal of the Armenian Church. We must go beyond slogans: we need new paradigms, a new vision, and a critical self-assessment. Renewal is crucial for the future of the Armenian Church, and we must take it seriously.

I consider the active participation of the youth to be of paramount importance in the renewal of the Armenian Church. With their fresh ideas, creative imagination, challenging views, and critical approach, they can bring a new vitality to our church. The growing involvement of the youth in various functions of the church is encouraging. But in order to make the youth identify with their church, the church must have the vision to identify itself with the youth: with their concerns and perspectives, frustrations and expectations. Our church must be a spiritual haven for its youth, where they can protect themselves from the powerful storms and tsunamis of new times. ☩

Letters

☐ Letters start on page A10

port unique plants and animals, and a dump site that will be a blight on the environment and long-term threat to the health of future generations in northern Armenia and possibly even neighboring countries.

SOS Teghut is a coalition of 26 environmental organizations in Armenia working together to inform the Armenian public and concerned citizens around the globe of the ecological disaster that is looming in Teghut. We are asking the Armenian government to further analyze the costs and benefits of approving this mine and to consider instead other forms of more sustainable economic development possibilities for the region.

More information and photos about Teghut and can be found at Armenia Tree Project's

website www.armeniatree.org. Anyone interested in supporting the effort to preserve the landscape there and advocate for more sustainable development can participate in SOS Teghut's Action Alert by sending an electronic letter to the president and other government officials from the website as well.

Throughout history there are many examples of civilizations which flourished, then mysteriously disappeared. The author Jared Diamond, in his book *Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed*, researched and documented evidence of what many of these civilizations had in common – in every case, the demise of the civilization was preceded by an unsustainable use of their natural resources, including complete deforestation of the land, which became unable to support the population.

As Armenians who managed to survive for millennia, we must consider the legacy our

ancestors left to us on this precious land, and be responsible to the generations of Armenians to come to do the same for them.

Very truly yours,
Jeff Masarjian
Watertown, Mass.

The author is the executive director of the Armenia Tree Project.

Almost like being there

Sir:
Your fine and insightful profile of Harry Koundakjian ("Celebrating the works of a master photojournalist," Arts & Culture, Jun. 30) expressed the man as he is, and exactly the way he approaches his work: honestly and warm-heartedly.

It made me regret that my absence from Beirut coincided exactly with the exhibition dates, which from all accounts was a memorable and even inspirational event. But reading your article and sidebar gave me some consolation for not having been there. Thank you very much for publishing them.

Very truly yours,
Rev. Nishan Bakalian
Beirut, Lebanon

The writer is the Campus Minister of Beirut's Haigazian University.

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