



The Azokh Caves Project

Dr. Tania King takes multi-tasking to the limits. Some years after completing a PhD in Biological Anthropology from University College London (UCL), she began to feel that her interests were more with living humans than their fossil ancestors. So, in addition to a raft of fascinating projects on evolution, she began the long haul of becoming a medical doctor. Now a junior doctor, Tania maintains the project which began with a dream to spend time in Armenia. The Azokh Caves Project of Karabakh has already run for six years and uncovered important finds as well as providing training for student scientists and work for local assistants.

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Looking Ahead

Making Armenian culture and history a living experience remains to be a central goal of our efforts, says director Dr. Susan Pattie

Dear Friends,

As reflected in the pages of this newsletter, it is a pleasure to report that the Institute had another exciting and successful year in 2007. Series of activities and events were held reflecting the core objectives of the Institute. Making Armenian culture and history a living experience remains to be a central goal of our efforts.

The newsletter itself has been evolving and has thus taken more time this year to reach the press. We continue to report on AI events but are moving towards more essays, reviews, interviews and stories. We hope this would make the newsletter a more vibrant form of communication and would bring more news about the British and international Armenian world.

This issue includes our first original piece of fiction, a charming children's fable written and illustrated by Nouneh Sarkissian. We welcome feedback from you about content and direction and note that in future, the expanded newsletter will be sent free of charge only to our Friends, Patrons and Benefactors. A shorter letter will arrive more frequently with reports and announcements of recent and upcoming events. The quickest way to receive such information though is by email and website so please let us know if we do not have your latest email address.

We look forward to hearing from you and to seeing you at upcoming events.

Children and their families enjoyed an afternoon party with Nouneh Sarkissian (below right) as she introduced the charming heroine of her new children's fairytale book, which is being translated into English by Maral Ovanessoff (below left). Story on page 9.



COMMUNITY NEWSMAKERS (continued from page 1)

In recognition of this and with gratitude for her team's dedication, Tania King was presented with a special commemorative coin medallion by the Speaker of Parliament of Karabakh, one of only five such coins awarded. This gesture of recognition was arranged by a well-known journalist, Narine Aghabalyan, who had been impressed with the team's work as she made documentaries about them.

Born in St Albans, daughter of Andrew and Anahid Hovsepian King, Tania became interested in archaeology and human origins and decided take an "A" level in Archaeology, run by the local museum, where she was the only student. Through this she made contact with



researchers at the Natural History Museum (NHM) and was mentored by Professor Peter Andrews who later supervised her PhD and now works on the Azokh Project. Tania says that Armenian culture was always part of her home and extended family while growing up. "I was always aware of being of 'mixed ethnicity' and rather liked this contrast - it makes life more interesting. I loved Armenian music, dancing, food and going to Armenian church. As I did not live in London then, I was unable to participate in Armenian School and other groups/activities and I didn't have Armenian friends other than my family. I think this made me want to explore my Armenian roots even more. Later I was the first member of my family to visit Armenia - in 1989 as part of Land and Culture Organisation. That trip allowed me to make some good friends and made me more determined to go back. I got involved with the Armenian Rights Group (organised by Misak Ohanian, CAIA) in 1993 and one of the friends within that group played a key role in the start-up of the Azokh Caves project. Dr. Razmik Panossian made me aware that the site existed! I was also involved in a discussion group for young Armenians, organised by Ani King-Underwood and Susan Pattie. However, I could not speak Armenian very well and always felt this to be a big lack in my life. One member of my close family, who was like a grandmother to me, could not speak English. She was born in Van and survived the genocide. It was always

frustrating to be so limited in our relationship and communication. Learning Armenian and spending six months in Armenia in 1998 achieved one of my biggest dreams and has made me feel very fulfilled."

After obtaining her PhD, Tania was working at the NHM when, by chance, a colleague received a letter from an Armenian geologist. In 1998, with time off between projects and a successful grant from the Wingate Trust, Tania spent six months looking for potential sites of early human remains. However, nothing emerged until they visited Azokh which Tania explored briefly with her husband, Adam. They arrived in a tiny car, in dreadful weather, found very difficult access -- but they could see that there were sediments and thus, potential. Back in the UK,

Tania spoke with Prof. Andrews and a colleague in Spain, Dr. Yolanda Fernandez Jalvo, co-director of the project. The three arranged to do a small survey of Armenia and of Azokh, joined by Dr. Levon Yepiskoposian of Yerevan. Azokh Cave site, first discovered in the 1960s, was still promising. Russian and Azeri scientists worked on it until the 1980s but stopped work after the war and all the material was taken to Baku, including a small fragment of a pre-Neanderthal jaw. The logistics and the political situation made the situation difficult, however, so they carried on surveying in Armenia again in 2001, especially in the north, adjacent to the border with Georgia, in the Javakheti Range. On the Georgian side several remains of hominids dating about 1.8 million years ago have been found in Dmanisi, the earliest human ancestors found outside Africa. But again, no serious possibilities emerged and their focus returned to Azokh.

Unfortunately, applications to major donors were refused as Karabakh is not recognised as a state.

The team decided to go ahead anyway with small amounts of funding, including Armenian charities such as the AGBU and individual donors. In 2002 colleagues from Spain, Armenia, the UK, and Karabakh installed the infrastructure for the excavation with a grid for a permanent reference system, working in metre squares. An aerial grid, created by drilling holes into the cave walls (rather than a ground grid) proved to be excellent for recording finds, allowing three dimensions, using laser projections as surveyors do. First a huge backfill deposited by the previous teams had to be sifted through by local assistants, using their home wheat sieves to do the job. In doing so, they found some exciting fossils in the backfill including cave bear and some large mammal remains. The team returned in 2003, joined by a geologist colleague from Ireland. In spite of funding problems, political and local economic pressures, Tania and the team continue the work. She notes that "the cave is important in terms of learning about the migration of early human ancestors. Humans might be following the migration of animals as they went out of Africa. Azokh is probably on a corridor from Africa into Asia on the one hand and Europe on the other. The southern Caucasus is one of the possible routes out of Africa..."

Azokh is also important because of Dmanisi (above) and Mezmaiskaya, another cave site in the northern Caucasus which is one of the latest sites for

Neanderthals, with remains dated to about 28 thousand years ago. Chronologically, Azokh sits in the middle, probably a transition period, a minimum of 700,000 years of the story of humanity. In addition, there is also evidence of recent history. In upper areas, the team found compressed and burned animal faeces left within the last 100 years, typical of areas where humans and domesticated animals are living together. When the team asked, they were told stories of the village under siege and earlier generations escaping to the caves with their animals, staying there for several weeks until it was safe. Finally, the cave is also of ecological interest with an opportunity to observe about 20 species of bats.

In addition to its scientific importance, the project provides training and work for local people. From the outset, Tania explained, the idea was that this training in modern techniques of archaeology and paleoanthropology would lead to local scientists taking over the running of the site. The team also helps with training local students, involving them in the project at various levels, with keen teachers, such as Dr. Norah Moloney, UCL Institute of Archaeology. One full-time employee helps with everything from watching the site during the year to driving and general administration. Local field staff provide services in the village, cooking, driving, finding firewood and housing. The money spent on these services then gets fed back into the local economy. One lady, for example, used her money to buy a goat one year to provide cheese for her children and then the next year she bought a cow. "This part of the project is for me the most satisfying. I am looking forward to local people taking over the site. The science is great - but my main interest is the local people. I feel very comfortable in Armenia and have very close friends there now. I often feel as if I have two lives - one that is lived here in the UK and the other that is in Armenia."

The Azokh Caves Project is grateful for the support of the AGBU and individual donors in the past and is now entirely dependent on the continuation of such contributions. Donations can be made through the Armenian Institute and will be passed on immediately to the project (cheques made out to the "Armenian Institute" with an accompanying letter indicating that the funding go to the Azokh Caves Project). The project is also looking for volunteers to participate in the excavations and enquiries can be made via Azokh.Caves@gmail.com. *Susan Pattie*

Akhtamar: the Renovation

A talk by Dr. Mark Grigoryan, 5 July, Armenian House
BBC producer Mark Grigoryan was assigned to cover the opening of Surp Khach (Holy Cross) Church on the island of Akhtamar, after extensive renovations. Visa problems prevented his attending the big event but on reflection, Grigoryan noted that a later quieter visit had provided him with an opportunity for a much more profound experience, going beyond the original journalistic aims. During his talk on 5 July 2007, Grigoryan showed stunning photographs of the island and church and described the results of the successful renovation, touching on some of the accompanying controversies. Copies of his photographs are available for sale through the Armenian Institute or Mark.



Sayat Nova Ensemble

Concert on February 11 at the Conway Hall
Sarkis Zakarian (piano), Anais Heghoyan (soprano)

After the success of their first concert in 2006, the Sayat Nova Ensemble was invited back to be part of the London Chamber Society cycle of concerts. Co-sponsored by the Armenian Institute, the concert was supported by a generous grant from the Benlian Trust as part of the ongoing Young Artists Series. The ensemble, as always, included young professionals as mentors leading the sections alongside highly talented students. This year many students were from Armenia but included others from Estonia, Scotland and Holland as well as England. Leading from the first violin, Levon Chilingirian directed the ensemble joined by soloists Sarkis Zakarian (piano) and Anais Heghoyan (soprano). The programme included a variety of pieces beginning with the lively and popular Aslamazian-Komitas Armenian Songs and Dances, continuing with the haunting "Coventry" by Vilem Tausky, written after the shock of seeing the devastation of the city. Zakarian played brilliantly in the piano concerto in A K414 by Mozart, in lively conversation with the Ensemble. The poignant strains of Dido's Lament by Purcell began the second half of the concert as the extraordinarily rich tone of soprano Anais Heghoyan (London) transfixed the audience. This quiet but moving atmosphere continued in the Ensemble's rendition of Vibration Painting by Alan Hovhanness. In the final piece, a very different emotional range followed as the Ensemble clearly enjoyed the whimsical and showy extracts from Tigran Mansourian's ballet "Snow Queen". We look forward to future concerts with the Sayat Nova Ensemble.

Armenians in Unusual Places

or Little-known References to Armenia and Armenians around the UK

The Sayat Nova Ensemble gave another exciting performance at the Boxgrove Festival on June 9. Their return engagement was enthusiastically received and included most of the pieces performed earlier at the Conway Hall including soloists Zakarian and Heghoyan. Levon Chilingirian is artistic director of the Festival as well

as leader of the Ensemble. During the interval the few Armenian members of the audience looked around the beautiful church and were amazed to discover a statue in the niche of a small side chapel accompanied by the following notice: The Chapel of St. Blaise within St Mary's Church at Boxgrove Priory

"The statue of our 'secondary patron', modern but standing in the original niche, anachronistically represents him in the vestments of a medieval bishop but he was Bishop of Sebaste in Armenia in the 3rd Century. Before death he was tortured by having his flesh torn with wool carding combs. On his way to the scaffold his prayers saved the life of a child choking to death. The monks of Boxgrove, like all Benedictines, were active agriculturalists and kept many sheep on their Downland properties. So they chose Blaise, patron of wool-workers, for their patron. On February 3, his feast day, his prayers are invoked and God's blessing asked against all diseases and ailments of the throat."

This year is the 900th anniversary of the arrival of the Benedictine monks who founded Boxgrove Priory, now in ruins beside the church. The Boxgrove Festival plans to include Armenian sacred music in one of the concerts, to honour St Blaise, and has invited the Akn Ensemble of Paris.

Manti Mania

Cookery Demonstration and Dinner, 20 October

Master chefs Sirarpie Manoukian and Rita Koundarjian led an enthusiastic group through the steps of creating Manti, a favourite from the Armenian culinary repertoire. The hands-on demonstration and clear and persuasive instructions enabled everyone to participate and learn how to do it themselves. Everyone got their hands full of



flour, rolling out and pinching the manti into shape. The large kitchen at St Stephen's was filled with trays of manti as well as preparations for the salads and desserts that accompanied the later meal. Rita and Sirarpie had already made many trays of manti for the evening and the students' work was added to this. All were required as a large crowd joined them at dinner time and people eagerly con-

sumed the food. There were many compliments for the cooks and requests for repeat performances. We are very grateful to Rita and Sirarpie for their patient instruction and for the wonderful food they prepared and contributed.

ARMENIAN STUDIES GROUP

A Memorial Tribute for Hrant Dink

12 February 2007, Brunei Gallery (SOAS)

Nearly 100 people crowded into a lecture room at SOAS to pay their respects to Hrant Dink and to hear four panellists speak about him as a person, as an innovator and outspoken critic and builder of bridges. People sat on window-sills, stood in the doorway, and filled in cracks where they could find them. The mood was sombre and respectful and there was a sense that this would be the first of many and ongoing events to remember the legacy of Hrant Dink. In fact this legacy became immediately apparent in the many new friendships and meetings between Armenian, Turks, Kurds, and others which have developed through this collaboration.

Using the text of Rakel Dink's eulogy to discuss the courageous contributions of Hrant Dink, Dr. Sossie Kasbarian, moderator of the AI's Armenian Studies Group, introduced the session and the speakers. Dr. Hratch Tchilingirian spoke about Hrant Dink and the Armenians of Turkey, his "voice of dignity", speaking up for the Armenians as a minority group, as equal citizens, as people who loved their country and wanted to see it improve for all its people. He ended by noting that Dink opened the door to a future that Armenians and Turks must find together. Dr. Kerem Öktem also sought to find a light in the darkness of the moment, observing that "Hrant Dink's expressed wish to 'Turn the hell in which we live into Paradise' may become his true legacy, guiding the way for those who share his belief in a more humane world and a Turkey more hospitable to its own people and its many Diasporas." Author and translator Maureen Freely talked about Hrant Dink and Article 301 from a journalist's perspective and spoke of witnessing his great courage. The closing remarks were made by Dr. George Dedes, Lecturer in Turkish at SOAS. The programme concluded with the showing of a video created by Helin Anahit, showing moving footage of the funeral procession and tributes in Istanbul.

"Sincerity, my only weapon"

A Tribute to Hrant Dink, 28 February 2008, New Auditorium, The Human Rights Action Centre, Amnesty International

A moving commemoration of the life of Hrant Dink was organised by Amnesty International, the Armenian Institute, Article 19, Index on Censorship, Open Democracy and English Pen on his 40 days memorial (karasounk). Music, poetry, readings and personal tributes contributed to the emotionally charged evening. Beginning and ending with Armenian folk music played on the duduk by Tigran Alexanian, the evening included ren-

ditions of Dink's last column and Rakel Dink's eulogy by actors Jack Klaff and Elizabeth Counsell respectively. Prof. Ronald Suny, Maureen Freely and Nouritza Matossian also spoke about their personal impressions of the man, highlighting his bravery, insightfulness, and sense of humour. Poetry was recited by Hagop Varoujian and Sonya Varoujian in Armenian and in English. Levon Chilingirian played three pieces including Bach and Komitas, and Sonia Vartoukian sang Groong (Crane) and Oror (Lullaby). The evening concluded with a video made by Nouritza Matossian of conversations she had filmed with Hrant Dink (see separate article for excerpts) and then striking images from his funeral. A reception followed for the overflow crowd, hosted by Amnesty International, with food generously supplied by Jakobs.

Remembered for his focus on friendship, reconciliation, love for his homeland of Turkey, persistence and courage in his work and dedication to human rights and freedom of the press and democracy, the message of the evening was to continue Hrant Dink's work in the same spirit of peace and reconciliation in order to truly honour his memory. *Louisa Culleton*

Truth in Telling

Armenian and Turkish Historians Confront the Genocide Ronald Suny lecture, 25 February 2007

Prof. Ronald Suny was welcomed by a large crowd and, as always, stimulated a lively discussion following his talk. In the aftermath of the assassination of Hrant Dink, he changed his topic and instead spoke about the Workshop on Armenian and Turkish Studies (WATS) that he, Prof. Muge Goçek and others at the University of Michigan had initiated, now ten years ago. He included his own experience of meeting with Hrant Dink as Dink had attended WATS and had visited the University of Michigan. WATS is premised on the understanding that there was a genocide of the Armenians and that there is a need for Armenian and Turkish scholars to communicate with each other regarding the immense amount of work left to be done surrounding relations over the centuries. Dr. Suny discussed the genesis of WATS and how it has developed through its meetings held in different cities around the world. The method of combining a quiet semi-closed meeting for scholars with a more public meeting for presentations is one that has proved very successful but also has provoked criticism. Suny pointed out that both are essential in order to provide the necessary environment for speaking frankly and building trust. Ronald Suny is Professor Emeritus of Political Science and History, the University of Chicago and Charles Tilley Professor of Social and Political History at the University of Michigan.

"An Armenian Future?"

Youth Conference in Manchester

Director Dr. Susan Pattie was invited as guest speaker at the first Pan-UK Armenian Youth Conference, "An Armenian Future?", hosted by the Manchester Armenian Youth Organisation (MAYO). Held on 28 April 2007, six

different organisations made presentations about their work in an outstanding example of cooperation and mutual help. Land and Culture Organisation (LCO), Homenetmen, Armenian Students Associations, Diaspora-Armenia Connection (DAC), AGBU, and MAYO outlined variations on shared themes of dedicated volunteer work and equally dedicated socialising (sometimes called "networking"). Three further presentations covered more general subjects. Harmick Azarian gave a very informative and thoughtful talk on the possibilities of migrating to Armenia. When asked, fully one third of those present said they would consider such a move. Speaking in Armenian, Sevan Artin of Hay Tad Committee asked challenging questions about changes young people would like to see. Concerning Diaspora-Armenia relations, Dr. Audrey Selian stressed the importance of speaking out on contentious issues and raised the problem of Western Armenian disappearing, linking this to controversial closures of Armenian schools. Dr. Pattie extended these thoughts with her concluding talk, "Pride and Prejudice in a Multi-cultural World", speaking about the challenges of being fully integrated into society without losing a connection with one's heritage and identity. Billed as a conference for the next generation of leaders of the Armenian community, it indeed inspired great optimism for the future of the U.K. community. MAYO with Talar Ozkaya in London were the driving forces behind the meeting with the added incentive of putting Manchester back on the British community's map.

The Changing Landscape of Historic Western Armenia

Reflections on a journey into the past by Prof. Richard G. Hovannisian lecture, 3 March at Kensington Central Library

Prof. Richard Hovannisian was welcomed back to the London as he gave a moving talk about his recent journey to the old homelands of eastern Anatolia. Prof. Hovannisian showed photos of the countryside, old towns and villages, as he reflected on the personal impact the trip had had as well as the historical connections he had witnessed. After a lifetime of professional research into this area, this was his first visit, opening up new questions and perspectives on old problems and ideas. Projected photographs of the area beautifully illustrated the talk, highlighting visits to Van, Agn, Erzurum and other places. He had joined the annual trip made by Prof. Muge Goçek of the University of Michigan who each year invites a small number of people to explore the region with her. Helin Anahit of the Armenian Institute also joined the group that year, along with Prof. Hovannisian's wife, Vartiter, and several others. Dr. Hovannisian is AEF Professor of Modern Armenian History, University of California, Los Angeles and the author and editor of numerous volumes on Armenian history including the four-volume history *The Republic of Armenia, Armenia on the Road to Independence*, and an ongoing series of volumes on historic Armenian cities and provinces.

AI-SOAS ARMENIAN STUDIES GROUP (ASG)

The year 2007 started off on a sombre note, with ASG co-hosting the Tribute to Hrant Dink at SOAS in February (see separate article). After running for more than four years, the ASG initiators are rethinking ASG's purpose and mission. There is a need to return to some of the founding ideas of ASG - providing a friendly and supportive forum for scholars, young and experienced, to prepare work for submission or publication. Thus the priority will be threefold: the work of students preparing long essays or undergraduate and postgraduate dissertations; researchers preparing papers for conferences and publication and others wanting to present their work for dedicated feedback and suggestions for improvement. In this way, we hope to solidify ASG's original vision of a community of scholars and researchers, committed to learning from each other and preparing their work to the highest possible standard. The following sessions took place during 2007, all at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS). *Dr. Sossie Kasbarian (ASG Moderator)*

March 7: Audrey Selian. Democracies: Political Development & ICTs in Post-Communist Armenia

This presentation focused on aspects of a fundamental question based on underlying assumptions about the role of technology in the political development of a transitioning, post-communist society (case study: Armenia). The relationship between information and communication technologies (ICTs) and the polity, particularly in developing countries, is a highly dynamic one upon which deterministic thought is often projected without empirical justification. This leads at times to uninformed policy formulation trying to match conventional wisdoms to more idiosyncratic factors. Examples of a select number of national institutions in Armenia were presented as a piece of wider qualitative case work undertaken at the end of 2004. Audrey Selian, PhD, Tufts University, is currently working on framing a roll-out strategy for the Sustainable Development Initiative of a private equity investment group here in London. She was a Doctoral Fellow at the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University and a Visiting Fellow at the American University of Armenia.

May 2: Bert Vaux (Cambridge). Armenian Linguistics

Prof. Bert Vaux gave a fascinating tour of the history and structure of the Armenian language, providing insights into the methods of phonology and dialectology. Addressing the most popular questions asked by non-linguists - where did Armenian come from, how do we know how it was pronounced in earlier times, how many varieties are there?, Prof. Vaux demonstrated the ways in which linguists piece together scraps of information to build a picture of early language usage. Small, apparently trivial bits of information, each interesting in themselves, include the fact that only Armenian and Amharic do not use a variant of the word "coffee" for the well-known drink. Prof. Vaux noted that as a living language, Armenian has evolved over centuries into many dialects, becoming standardised only relatively recently. Now he

and many others are concerned that the varieties of Armenian dialects must be documented before they die out. Dr. Bert Vaux is University Lecturer in Phonology and Morphology at the University of Cambridge. Vaux specialises in phonological theory, dialectology, field methodology, and languages of the Caucasus but also works on the Harvard Survey of North American Dialects and, among numerous publications, is editor of the book series Oxford Surveys in Generative Phonology.

May 30: Armine Ishkanian (LSE). Culture and Democracy-Building in Armenia

In analysing why the transitions to democracy have not yielded the expected results, some scholars and policy makers have argued that a society's propensity or 'fitness' for democracy is predicated on its cultural and geographic proximity to the West. Such sweeping claims which blame culture for the lack of democracy are hardly new; they are examples of the interpretations that have been used to explain the failure of development and modernisation programmes since the 1950s. The paper critically examined these essentialist arguments and asked: does culture affect democracy building in Armenia? Dr Armine Ishkanian, is a Lecturer at the Centre for Civil Society and a Research Associate at the Centre for the Study of Global Governance, London School of Economics. Her regional expertise is on the countries of the former Soviet Union with a particular focus on Armenia. She has published widely with a book forthcoming with Routledge.

June 21: Arman Sarvarian (SOAS). Towards An Objective Legal Analysis of the Artsakh Question

Arman Sarvarian presented his LL.B. dissertation, a criticism of the legal positions of the respective conflict parties in Artsakh, in which the prevalent 'secession' paradigm is, rejected and one of an interstate territorial title dispute is instead advanced. He also explored the relevant legal history of the conflict, presenting the interstate dispute paradigm, and submitting alternative legal bases that a putative adjudicator could rely upon for a legal solution to the conflict and for the development of principles of public international law. Arman Sarvarian recently completed his LL.B. Law from SOAS. He plans to complete an LL.M. in Public International Law at the University of Cambridge next year and then qualify as a Barrister.

October 8: Saro Derian (SOAS). The Diaspora: Well-Organised for Armenia's Development?

Looking at the use of the term "diaspora" in a development context, Saro Derian examined the evident problems using comparative analysis. He discussed the issue of stretching the concept of diaspora, potentially weakening its usefulness and extended this to a concern about how the concept is applied for identifying specific behaviours for development. International organisations claim that 'diaspora' represents a valuable resource pool for the processes of national development and Derian has researched earlier initiatives of the World Bank and the United Nations Development Programme which targeted the Armenian Diaspora for involvement in development initiatives. Analysing the conceptual challenges to the Diaspora-Development Paradigm through the trajectory of the

Armenian diaspora's involvement in Armenia, Derian highlighted various roles and outcomes. Saro Derian recently completed an MSc in Development Studies at SOAS.

November 28: Paresh Kathrani LL.B. (Hons) LL.M. Genocide: A Fracture in International Justice

The Genocide Convention was part of a framework of international instruments that were concluded after the Second World War in order to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights and in the dignity and worth of the human person. Human rights lawyer Paresh Kathrani explored the differences between the system of command and sanction of international law and that of domestic law. He noted that it is the responsibility of the international community to enforce a system of international justice but this has contributed to disasters in places like Bosnia, Rwanda and Sudan. At the same time, Kathrani made the point that unless the international community musters the requisite will to ensure that those who have been responsible for genocides in the past face their crimes, the ethos of international justice that was envisaged after the Second World War will also be undermined. Now a barrister, Paresh Kathrani undertook his Bachelor of Laws and Masters of Law in London. He then spent time studying the sociological consequences of the war in the Balkans and visiting Soweto in South Africa. His main research areas are international law, international justice and philosophy.

Language Classes

The Armenian Institute continues to offer evening classes for adults in eastern and western variants of Armenian. We have a wonderful team of teachers and students who keep each other entertained weekly. Rita Koundarjian teaches the intermediate section of Western Armenian while Sossie Yeretsian teaches beginners. Gagik Stepan-Sarkissian instructs Eastern Armenian. The students' enthusiasm is contagious and teachers have been impressed with their dedication. We hope to add an advanced section as there has been a demand by those who are already fluent in Armenian but who wish to improve. A minimum of 4 students is needed to run a class.

We also instigated a new kind of teaching with the Intensive Armenian Conversation afternoons. Dianne Aslanyan approached AI with the wish to provide opportunities for adults to learn some very basic greetings and phrases in order to get along in their social circles. She and Susan Pattie developed a self-contained afternoon of lessons which focus on the basics and on getting people talking. Using a variety of methods, including, of course, serving and eating food, the students were surprised at how much they had learned at the end of 3 hours. AI will continue to offer intensive courses periodically in addition to the normal term-time classes.

The Gulbenkian Foundation has generously granted funds to purchase teaching tools and resources, enabling the library to add extra copies of textbooks for students as well as books, DVDs and CDs that will give the teachers themselves ideas about the latest methods of language acquisition. We are very grateful for this.

ORAL HISTORY WORKSHOP

Pre-1915 Family Photographs

29 April 2007, Armenian House

Following the moving exhibition of old photographs at the Menier Chocolate Factory, organised by Land and Culture Organisation, our ongoing Oral History series invited people to uncover their own family photographs of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. A lively session began with Dr Susan Pattie using projected pictures from Adana and Kessab to demonstrate how the details of the photos themselves can reveal information about the people and their times. Others present then showed the photos they had brought and spoke about the stories they had heard from those portrayed. Early photos from the 1880s were shown by Rita and Hovaness Koundarjian, including pictures from Gessaria and Robert College. Photos of relatives in Tokat, Van, Iran, India were passed around the table as others spoke of their family histories and the variety of trades and experiences they had pre-genocide.



Minority Rights Report

An unlikely bestseller: Minority Rights Report on the Armenians, 1 February 2007, Armenian House

Co-author of the Report, historian Christopher Walker spoke on the 30th anniversary of its publication. The first edition was published in September 1976 and was developed from a general need to present the Armenian case. Walker paid tribute to his co-author, the late Professor David Marshall Lang. Lang's contribution was mostly on Soviet Armenia with figures and statistics of perhaps dubious accuracy. The first Report skirted around certain issues, perhaps to spare the sensitivities of Turkey. There was good coverage of the Diaspora albeit with some weak points, e.g. only five lines were devoted to the community in France. These shortcomings were amended in later editions.

The Report was so successfully received that several revised editions followed quickly, the first a few months later, in January 1977 and subsequent editions in 1978, 1981 and 1987. The last edition was reprinted in March 1991 and contained a four page update by Walker on the changing political situation in and around Soviet Armenia. Editions in French and Armenian also appeared.



There was no official reaction from the Turkish government, but a Turkish scholar, Dr Salahi R. Sonyal published a pamphlet against the Report. Walker said that more documents have been declassified since the 1970s and there is now further material available on the Armenians in British and other archives. However, the prospects of re-launching

the Report are remote, now that with the emergence of the Republic of Armenia, Armenians are no longer considered to be a 'minority group'. The British press in general did not take much notice of the Report until 1981 when the famous journalist Bernard Levin wrote what Walker described as 'a splendid article' in the Times. This not only provided good publicity for the Report, but also resulted in Turks demonstrating against the Levin article. Speaking of his involvement in the Report, Walker said that during his research he always felt that he was facing a taboo on the Armenian issue with a community of historians who wanted to have nothing to do with the Armenians.

Open House London

16 September at St Sarkis Armenian Church

Each year on a weekend in September, Open House London arranges for buildings all over the city to be opened up to the general public. Their booklet is packed with information about alluring architecture, usually off-limits to the average Londoner and indeed many of those visiting St Sarkis each year mention that they pass the church many times and always wanted to be able to come inside. This year again, the Armenian Institute hosted the beautiful St Sarkis Armenian Church and several hundred visitors learned not only about the architecture of that building but the history of the Armenian community in the



Helen Culleton and Gregory King-Underwood at the entrance of St. Sarkis Church getting ready to welcome visitors

UK and of Armenians generally. In Gulbenkian Hall, the Institute created a display of the architecture of other Armenian churches and striking photographs taken by Mark Grigoryan and Margarita Grigoryan. Diana Kurkjian kindly provided coffee, tea and biscuits for the visitors.

St. Sarkis Armenian Church

Inspired by the interest of the visitors each year on London Open House day, the Armenian Institute has published its third title, a booklet that describes the architecture and history of the church, along with short sections on the Armenian Christian tradition, Armenian history, and St Sarkis himself. Produced with the generous support of the Trustees of St Sarkis Church, the booklet was written by Susan Pattie, Gagik Stepan-Sarkissian and Hratch Tchilingirian. Richly illustrated with photographs and architectural plans, the booklet was designed by Hratch Tchilingirian. Copies are available through the Institute.

Rally Round London

29 September in and around Bloomsbury

For the second year, participants enjoyed a race around London, vying to find answers to a quiz about secret corners and monuments of the city. Maral Ovanessoff and Rebecca Kouyoumdjian designed the challenging and very enjoyable day, providing maps and questionnaires for the teams of families. The tour covered some 5 miles from a start in the magnificent Great Court of the British Museum down to Covent Garden and across towards Regent Street and circling back eastwards. "Finds" included a statue of Anahita in the museum, uncovering layers of history through architecture, and discovering a hidden corner of the Arctic Circle before meeting Maral as the "contestants entered the finish line at a café in Russell Square. All money raised by the sponsored walk goes to the Children's Corner.

BRITISH LIBRARY

Sacred: Discover What We Share

Gallery talk by Rev. Dr. Nerses V. Nersessian, 28 July

From April to September 2007, the British Library set up an exhibition focusing on Christianity, Islam and Judaism. In a unique and compelling modern context the exhibition presented rare sacred texts from the Library's collection as well as loan items from other institutions. By bringing together exhibits from these religions, the commonalities and differences between the three 'Abrahamic faiths' were thus explored. A large and enthusiastic group of people followed the Rev. Dr. Nerses V. Nersessian, Curator of the Christian Middle East Section at the British Library who gave a gallery talk about the exhibition in general and highlighted the unique Armenian liturgical items exhibited. One was the British Library's most important Armenian manuscript, acquired through the efforts of Dr. Nersessian himself. The celebrated Awag Vank' Gospels were written in the eponymous monastery in Greater Armenia at the turn of the thirteenth century. Among

MEET THE AUTHOR

Sadap: A fairytale that really happened

Children and their families enjoyed an afternoon party on 13 May 2007 with author Nouneh Sarkissian as she introduced the charming and feisty character Sadap, the heroine of her new book. Nouneh spoke with the children about how she got her ideas for the book and then read an extract in Armenian. The book is being translated into English by Maral Ovanessoff who read another extract in English before the children began a hunt for the shiny button that Sadap needed to find. Once shiny and other buttons were in hand, the young artists took scissors and pens to paper and created their own huge snowmen after one of the character in the book. Everyone was ready then to try out Sadap's favourite food, delicious gatah made by Nouneh, Karine Grigoryan and Nairi Stepan-Sarkissian, along with more ordinary snacks and drinks. Though we have had many opportunities to meet authors of adult books, this is the first children's book party at the Armenian Institute and we look forward to more.

Nouneh Sarkissian has been publishing stories and essays since childhood. While the translation of Sadap into English is in progress, Sarkissian is preparing several other books for publication in Armenian. The book has been distributed to a number of schools and libraries and is on sale in Yerevan bookstores and through the Armenian Institute in London. Any profits from sales in Yerevan will be put towards a gift Sarkissian is planning for an orphanage there. Profits from those sold at the Armenian Institute are put towards the Children's Corner.

Review by Noemi Stepan-Sarkissian (9 years old)



The book *Sadap* was a great story, because it was full of adventure and fun. My favourite was actually the main character, Sadap herself. She was very kind and clever. Vashivosh was very mean and he always wanted to steal things from people. The funniest characters were the four small people who first appeared from Sadap's bedroom wall through a wooden door. Amongst the four little people I liked Professor Gaspar the best. He talked in a funny way and was proud of himself. The end was the best bit, when all of Sadap's family got together and they had no more worries, because Vashivosh had started to be nice and Sadap had found the five golden buttons. But read on to find out how they got lost and where she found them.

I really loved this book and so I recommend it for young children. If I did not have this book and had just seen its front cover, I would definitely want to read it because of the lovely but curious pictures. If you read the first chapter you would instantly want to read more. And if I had not read it, I would want it for a birthday or Christmas present.

Armenian exhibits was the personal Book of Hours (Breviary) of King Levon (reigned 1269-1289), the work of the scribe and artist Stepanos of Vahka.

Objects of Instruction

Treasures of the School of Oriental and African Studies, 17 November at the Brunei Gallery (SOAS)

The Rev. Dr. Nerses V. Nersessian, Curator of the Christian Middle East Section at the British Library, gave a gallery talk at this fascinating exhibition, focusing on two illuminated Armenian manuscripts and liturgical books from other Oriental Christian traditions. Items on display were all taken from the permanent collection of SOAS. The first Armenian manuscript that described was a large lectionary - 'ašoc' - a compendium of readings during liturgy. In addition to Biblical texts, the Armenian lectionary contains Armenian patristic writings that deal exclusively with Armenian 'events', such as the Vardanank' and the translation of the Scriptures by Mesrop Mashtots' and his disciples. The manuscript was written in 1475 in Crimea where Armenians had settled after the famous battle of Manzikert in 1071. When the Ottoman Turks overran the region in the same year that the lectionary was written, there were nearly 300,000 Armenians living there. The Armenians took with them to Crimea the traditions developed in Cilicia and created in

their new home a unique culture in art, literature and manuscripts. On view was a title page of the lectionary with a 'carpet design' headpiece and a text representing almost all types of Armenian lettering, from uncials (erkat'agir) to bird letters (t'??nagir). In the Armenian tradition lectionaries follow the Jerusalem rite specifying the 'stage-management' of liturgical services. As such, they are important primary sources for scholars interested in the 'reconstruction' of the liturgy at the dawn of Christianity. The second manuscript was a small Gospel book of 16th-17th centuries. The book had been the property of William Marsden (1754-1836), a linguist-cum-historian of East India Company. Dr. Nersessian noted that the paintings consistently followed earlier patterns of manuscript illumination demonstrating elements of identity and theological orthodoxy.

Finally Dr. Nersessian spoke about more than 350 Armenian manuscripts he has catalogued in Britain. The British interest in Armenian liturgical texts goes back to the beginning of the Protestant tradition in Britain. Having rejected the Latin Vulgate and the Greek Septuagint, there was a desire to obtain a 'purer' text of the Scriptures. Competent people were sent out to collect and bring back old texts from other Christian traditions. This explains the presence of a large number of Armenian liturgical texts in Britain.

BOOK LAUNCHES

***The Fragrance of God. Reflections on Finding God through the Beauty and Glory of the Natural World* by Vigen Guroian (Darton-Longman-Todd), 2007. 10 May, Armenian House**

Vigen Guroian is best-known as an Orthodox theologian and prolific writer on ethics and religion as well as a range of subjects such as family and marriage, liturgy, and ecology. He is also passionate about gardening and in this new book, draws on his experiences of tending the earth to enrich his understanding of the nature of God and the seasons of life. Prof. Guroian gave a short talk explaining the genesis of this book, following on from his earlier *Inheriting Paradise* (2002). He then read passages which demonstrated his joyful exploration of the senses experienced in the process of gardening as well as a reliance on these same pleasures for deeper insights into change and loss. The book launch was co-hosted by the publisher and the Quiet Garden Society. Vigen Guroian is Professor of Theology at Loyola College in Baltimore, Maryland. (*The Fragrance of God* is available from the Armenian Institute.)



***Countries South of the Caucasus in Medieval Maps: Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan* by Rouben Galichian (Printinfo Art Books & Gomidas Institute), 21 November**

Galichian's second cartographic work discusses the geography of countries south of the Caucasus mountains, as depicted in medieval cartography originating from Latin Christian, Byzantine, Islamic, Syriac and Armenian traditions. During his richly illustrated presentation, Galichian focused on external social, economic and political sources that over millennia have influenced the region. In all medieval maps studied by Galichian, the territory of Armenia is always shown south of Georgia and Caucasian Albania, extending south-westward to the Armenian Plateau. Georgia, as a country, emerged in the twelfth century through the union of various principalities and first appeared in medieval maps a century later. On the other hand, the name 'Azerbaijan' was chosen for the republic established in the territories that were once the ancient and medieval land of Caucasian Albania only in 1918. Until then and for two millennia before, only the north-western Iranian province was known by that toponym. Galichian's presentation was followed by a lively question-and-answer session that continued throughout the reception afterwards. The book launch was organised jointly with the Gomidas Institute.

***Portraits of Hope. Armenians in the Contemporary World*. Edited by Huberta von Voss. Berghahn Books, 2007, 29 November**

A lively presentation of *Portraits of Hope* engaged an appreciative crowd as editor and writer Huberta von Voss was interviewed by Nouritza Matossian, one of the personalities and writers included in the book. Readings

from the book gave a sense of the wide range of people and material covered. Von Voss has selected forty-one Armenians, ranging widely in location, age and vocation, many of whom she herself has interviewed and describes here. "Portraits" also includes a variety of texts contributed by other authors on a variety of subjects, giving a broad outline of Armenian history and a context for the individual lives described. The introductory section is focused primarily on aspects of the genocide with writers such as Vahakn Dadrian and Taner Akçam contributing chapters. The further sections include people working as writers (for example, Matossian, Hrant Dink, Zori Balayan), the arts (e.g. Sarkis Hamalbashian, Ashot Bayandur), film (Atom Egoyan) as well as broader categories such as Faith, Commitment, Politics, and others. A final section on symbolic spaces extends the subjects covered in interesting ways, including chapters by Mark Grigoryan on Tsitsernakaberd Genocide Memorial in Yerevan and Victor Kocher on Bourj Hammoud. Von Voss herself shows great generosity of spirit and a creative curiosity in her pursuit of contemporary Armenian-ness. In her acknowledgements she mentions three Cypriot Armenians, well-known to Londoners, to whom she is especially grateful - Ruth Keshishian (Moufflon Bookstore), Garo Keheyran (Pharos Trust) and Nouritza Matossian. The book concludes with very helpful sections of an outline of Armenian history, a glossary, and suggestions for further reading. (Book available through AI)

Children's Corner

The installation of the new puppet stage has given shape and inspiration to the Children's Corner. Built by woodworker Nicky Stephens, son of author Taqui Altoonyan, the stage serves many purposes. A beautiful work itself with its simple lines bringing to mind traditional Armenian architecture, the stage can be used for glove, rod or shadow puppet performances. When not in use, the stage also acts as a door through which one enters the Corner. This is welcomed by the children who love the way this makes their space separate from the rest. The stage has been designed to fold up so it can be transported elsewhere for performances for larger crowds. It remains to be painted and we look forward to a work-day when volunteers will help to do this. Though the puppet stage is now associated physically with the Children's Corner, we will be looking for appropriate adult puppet shows as well (and ideally shows that are attractive to a mixed audience). The magnificent show by Astghik Vardanyan during the Winter Festival is an example of this, with images and music that were enjoyed by all ages. We also hope that it can also be used for bilingual plays to facilitate language learning and, of course, by the children themselves to create their own plays.

We have received a wonderful donation of shadow puppets from Ruth Keshishian, Moufflon Books, Cyprus. Of very fine quality, these puppets were collected during her research into puppetry in Indonesia and Cyprus. They are a very welcome beginning to our collection of puppets and we look forward to seeing how they will be used. Meanwhile, they will make a beautiful display.

Armenian Institute Film Club

Khachaturian, 8 November, Kensington Central Library

This extraordinary film about one composer's life and music during the great Soviet experiment was voted the best documentary at the Hollywood Film Festival and indeed was very well received by the audience this evening. Directed by Peter Rosen, footage of Khachaturian during the high and low points of his career was brought together in seamless storytelling. His family and heritage, musical and other influences, compositions, all were set against the background of the changing politics of culture in the Soviet Union. The mixture of high regard for artistry with underlying fear of loss of patronage was brought out as the film gave the viewers entry even to shocking events such as the denunciation of Khachaturian, Shostakovich and Prokofiev. The archival footage blended with interviews with colleagues and family provided new insights even for those very familiar with his life and work. Karina Georgian and Levon Chilingirian provided a very lively discussion afterwards. Winner of First Prize and Gold Medal at the Third Tchaikovsky International Competition in 1966, Karina worked and

toured with Khachaturian, taking turns with Mstislav Rostropovich to play his cello concerto.

CD LAUNCH

Sojourn at Ararat

20 November at Arthur Probsthain, Booksellers

In 1986 *Sojourn at Ararat* was premiered at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe to widespread acclaim. Created and originally performed by Gerald Papasian and Nora Armani, *Sojourn at Ararat* is a two-character play that narrates one couple's love story by weaving together excerpts from Armenian poetry and prose. The play has recently been revived in Los Angeles and to coincide with this, an audio CD of the play was produced to mark its 20th anniversary. The London launch of the CD at the eminent booksellers Arthur Probsthain in Great Russell Street was co-hosted by the Armenian Institute. Professor Eileen Barker of London School of Economics introduced Nora Armani who then read selected extracts from *Sojourn at Ararat* and answered questions about the original conception of the play and its recent revival. Copies of the CD are available at Probsthain's.

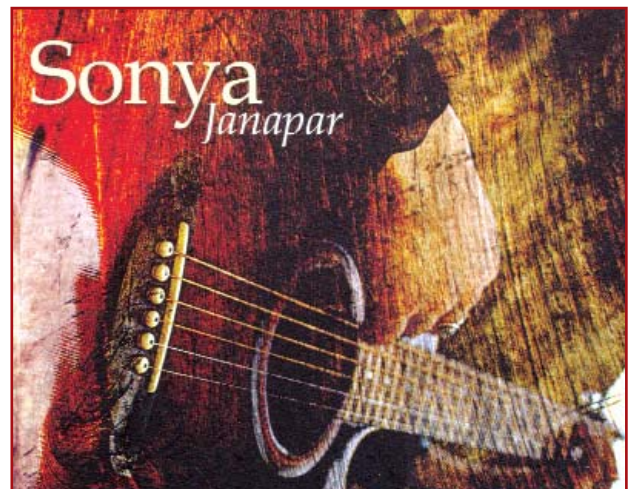
CD Review | Louisa Culleton

A New Path

Janapar (Path) - I am so happy to see that Sonya Varoujian has returned to her roots and produced a collection of songs in Armenian, using Armenian instruments, recorded in Armenia and inspired by her journey to there as a volunteer with DAC (Diasporan Armenian Connection) in 2005. *Janapar* is dedicated to the children of Marts village in the Lori region with whom the DAC group were working while renovating the school. Sonya found that she was inspired by this experience as well as the beauty of the landscape, and this led to a creative flood of song-writing.

Janapar is Sonya's fourth CD. Her background in music stems from parents who enjoy singing and performing. Sonya plays the guitar, sings, and composes her own music and lyrics in both Armenian and English. Her music is a celebration of life, love and homeland. She believes music is a gateway that allows people to share and experience truth and emotions that are normally left untapped. "Earthy" and ultimately folk music in style and sound - modern but traditional - the instrumental background contributes to this sound, with traditional instruments such as the kanon, shvi and duduk combined with strings, wind and percussion. The melodies are simultaneously catchy and soothing and the lyrics simple but deep and reflective. The CD has been compared to a fusion of Armenian folk with Celtic influences. Sonya grew up in the USA and England and was influenced by artists such as Sarah McLaughlin and the Cranberries. Already influenced by her Armenian heritage, she was recently exposed to the art of Armen Movsisyan, Lilit Pipoyan, Vahan Artsruni and Ruben Hakhverdyan during her visit to Armenia. Sonya's background and exposure to both Irish and Armenian culture comes across in her music. As well as the 12 talented Yerevan musicians that Sonya recorded with, she also collaborated with composer Narine Zarifyan who wrote arrangements for the songs. Armen Movsisyan edited the lyrics, poet Levon Blbulyan helped with the words for *Hayrenik* (Homeland) and Ruben Hakhverdyan wrote the first verse to *Ser* (Love).

Sonya has had successful performances in Yerevan, in 2006 at the Golden Guitar Festival, the Narekatsi Art Institute and the Avantgarde Folk Music Club. Heartfelt, whimsical and uplifting, this is a CD that should be part of every 'Armenian' collection! A percentage of the proceeds from the sale of *Janapar* goes to villages, like Marts, in Armenia. CDs are available in the UK through the Armenian Institute and can also be purchased online. Further information, photos, and concert dates, are available on www.myspace.com/sonyavaroujianmusic and www.sonyavaroujian.com.



Winter Festival & Vernissage

Our annual fair on 2 December in the Nevart Gulbenkian Hall was again a wonderful opportunity to share delicious food with friends and browse the craft and book stalls. Overflow crowds came throughout the afternoon, including families clustered by the children's tables where gifts were being created out of a variety of materials with Tania Tidanian and Anie Youshie's inspiration. Food was, as always, the main focus and lohmajoon was sold out within the first hour. This year we returned to our format of including special events and talks, most held in St Sarkis Church, next door. Levon Chilingirian spoke about the Armenian tradition of church music, Roubik Galichian presented his latest book, *Countries South of the Caucasus in Medieval Maps*, and Nouritza Matossian read from *Portraits of Hope* by Huberta von Voss. We went downstairs to the Armenian Institute library for "something completely different" as the new puppet stage in the Children's Corner was inaugurated. Asghtik Vardanyan presented *The Musician's House* with magnificent shadow puppets, story and puppets her own creations. The library was packed. We hope this will be repeated with other puppet shows in the near future.

Special thanks for the success of the day must go to Gigi Young, Tania Eghiayan, Tania Tidanian, Ani Youshie and the many volunteers who took care of all the work that goes into such a day. We are very grateful to the many people who brought home-made delicacies and to Jakobs Deli of Gloucester Road for their generous and delicious contributions to our food stall.

Donations to the Library

In a previous issue of Armenian Institute News (Volume 3, Issue 2-4, 2005) we reported on an important donation of several hundred valuable titles from the collection of the late writer, translator and painter, Mischa Kudian. Since then we have received other generous gifts and our recent arrivals are listed below.

Love of books forced the late **Gaspar Aghajanian** to rebuild a library each time he lost one through the vicissitudes of life in the Middle East in the 20th century. His latest collection was housed at his home in Shoreham-by-Sea in West Sussex. After his death in August, his widow Astrid generously donated over one hundred titles on the Middle East and Armenia.

The late **Mkrtich (Mack) Chahin**, the author of *The Kingdom of Armenia* and a lecturer on the ancient history of the Near East at Bristol University had built up an important collection of books on Armenia and adjoining lands. In March his widow, Mrs Margot Chahin very kindly offered to donate the entire collection. Rouben Galichian and Gagik Stepan-Sarkissian, the librarian, travelled to Somerset and having enjoyed Mrs Chahin's generous hospitality, brought back the collection of books.

Shahe Guebenlian, a veteran journalist with Reuters and a devoted friend of the Armenian Institute, died in March 2007, aged 86. His widow Iris generously donated many of his books. Amongst this valuable collection there is a rare dictionary of Armenian synonyms and two first editions of Vahan Tekeyan's poetry.

Felix Corley, a freelance researcher on religion in the Soviet Union, has donated an important collection of

books, documents and publications of international organisations in Russian and English, dealing with the Karabakh issue and recent history of southern Caucasus.

Rouben Galichian, trustee of the Institute, in addition to several books, has donated a collection of rare vinyl records of Armenian music to the library.

Anahit Kazarians, the former Headteacher of K Tahta Armenian Community Sunday School, donated several dozen books dealing with Armenian studies, culture and literature. Mostly recent publications, these books have come to complement the existing collection.

Rev. Dr. Nerses V Nersessian, Curator of the Christian Middle East Section at the British Library, has donated an important collection of valuable books on Armenian music, previously the property of the Institute of Armenian Music. Through Rev. Dr. Nersessian the Armenian Institute library has also received from the British Library surplus duplicate books treating various facets of Armenian studies.

The following friends of the Armenian Institute have also donated books to the Library: **Rev. Fr. Shnork Baghdassarian** (Armenian Vicarage), **Mary Bezhishkian** (courtesy of Dr. Anoosh Simelofian Major), Facing History and Ourselves National Foundation, Inc. (Brookline, Massachusetts, USA), **Joan George, A. Gorgodian, Gregory Krikorian, Stepan & Rita Ovanessoff, Dr. Susan P Pattie & Levon Chilingirian, Dr. Hratch Tchilingirian, Armenag Topalian, Dr. Andreas Zoulikian.**

The Armenian Institute is grateful to all donors who help enrich the library collection.

Let's Talk about the Living An Interview with Hrant Dink

In October 2005 writer **Nouritza Matossian** (pictured left) filmed a series of conversations with Hrant Dink (right). He had just been sentenced for 'insulting Turkishness' under the infamous Article 301 for words taken out of context from an article urging diaspora Armenians to give up their hatred of Turks. His six month sentence was suspended and he was receiving death threats. Later, in the aftermath of Dink's murder the interviews became a moving testament to the man and are now the basis of a film of these in-depth conversations. Here we publish edited extracts.

Staying in the homeland

NM: *What is it that ties you to this country?*

HD: It is my country, it is the country of my grandparents; the roots are here. Why is the diaspora always looking back here? The roots are here. Isn't it our grandparents' place?

You are in Istanbul. You are not living on your land.

Well, Istanbul was also ours - we have lived here for 15 centuries.

It was reported on the news that another church was just destroyed in the city of Diarbekir, no?

Yes. They will destroy and we will rebuild. We must learn to understand each other. Just wait. In history, losing places and regaining them is written with one sentence. In history, the passing of one century takes just one sentence. We don't know what we will live through. God. Oh, God. I am happy to live in my country. I go to Van, I go to Kars, I go to Diarbekir; I go everywhere.

The pleasure I feel being here, speaking a language which I only spoke with my grandparents, is bitter. I know it is not ours, that I am an unwanted guest here.

You are mistaken. You have lived here with people for centuries and they lived with you. When you say it is not ours, what is theirs is yours and what is yours is theirs. When you live with them and hear Turkish you realise that you are Armenian. If I live here and five times a day I hear the muezzin at his prayers, then at least five times a day, I recollect that I am Christian.

You mean it is dialectical.

It is very dialectical, very dialectical, very much so.

So it keeps you alert.

Very much. And you, in your reality abroad, in that luxurious freedom where assimilation is very high, do you live there in order to lose your identity? Here, if you don't want to remain Armenian, the pressure of others forces you to be Armenian. If every day someone curses you, if every day someone insults you, how can you not remain an Armenian? Your heart would burst. The pressure of others itself makes you remain Armenian. I don't say that the world should be this way.

The frontline

It is here. The frontline is here, and I want to be on the frontline. I thought it was hard to speak about the dead, but it was



harder to speak about the living in this country. To learn the truth, you need scientific knowledge, you need freedom of education. We must learn. These people have to learn. After learning the truth they will use their own conscience.

Why did you say you would leave this country?

I said that because I was sentenced to six months' imprisonment for insulting my fellow countrymen. A betrayal which for me is the worst of crimes in the world. It is racism. I don't accept it. I never denigrate my fellow countrymen, nor do I allow Armenians to insult them.

An Armenian unlike the others

My voice disturbed them. An Armenian appeared who was not like the Armenians they are used to, with his head bowed, but who lived in Turkey too and was serious. 'Yes, this is genocide.' But he says it in such a way that no one can object to him. He influences people. They are not used to this kind of thing. An Armenian who says, 'Come let's not just talk about our own people, let's talk about the living'.

You have turned yourself into a mirror and made them see everything in that mirror.

Of course, of course! It is that simple. At the same time I am a very good Turkish citizen, a very good Turk. That's what amazes them. We'll see. If my breath doesn't fail at the end. ... After the trial an old man sent me an email, he was a Muslim. 'My son, Ramadan has started and every day I go to prayers - five times. I also pray for you not to go away.' I was so moved by his writing that I translated Psalm 23 into Turkish and published it that week in my editorial. I was a naughty child and they used to make me learn psalms to stop me. I grew up but naughtiness did not leave me and now my psalms have become a habit perhaps. I repeat them.

Do you say them aloud?

Yes, I say them aloud. I confess it to all my left-wing friends. The psalm says: I will prepare a table before you in front of your enemies. Your head will be anointed with oil. My cup is full. Goodness and justice and mercy will flow all the days of your life. I will dwell many days in the house of the Lord - and much more. They give me strength, you know, the psalms. I want to find it and read it for you now. (He takes the Bible from the bookcase and reads out in Armenian. Closes the book. Looks at camera.) Is it finished?

Yes, Hrant. The tape is finished.

Thank you. (Smiles) Then, shall we go?

RELATIVE VALUES

Round Trip to the Sea

SUSAN PATTIE

This will be an occasional series exploring family ties in diaspora. Here we reprint an abridged version of an article first published in AIM, April 2002, which highlights the Aghajanian family. Gaspar Aghajanian, one of the original Friends of AI, died in 2007 at the age of 96 and Astrid has moved to Belfast.

Shoreham Beach on the southern English coast is a small, quiet cluster of bungalows. It seems an unlikely place to find the man who was the only Armenian judge in Palestine under the British Mandate but Gaspar Aghajanian and his wife, Astrid, have made their home there in a cottage near the sea. Few others, even in this land of consummate gardeners, have chosen to battle against the poor soil and sea spray of the shoreline but Gaspar and Astrid have created a colourful oasis of flower beds and a wide variety of fruit trees, herbs and vegetables.

There are other reminders of the Aghajanians' past lives around the small house, but not many. The last time they moved, they left home with only a small suitcase. That was the third time Astrid had been a refugee. With little money and no belongings, they created a new home, bright and inviting, the living room enlivened by the many prints, paintings, and sculptures of the next generations, artist daughters Sophie and Edessia and their families. Astrid is a small and graceful woman, her round eyes always curious and alert, about to ask a question. Born in Albestan, now in Turkey, she was originally named Helen Gaydzakian. Her father died in 1915, but during the deportations, Astrid's mother managed to escape with her by hiding in a pile of dead bodies, protecting the small child beneath her. When soldiers thrust their bayonets into corpses, the mother was badly wounded but remained silent until the horizon was empty of living souls. She then walked, carrying her daughter, until she came upon a Bedouin camp, and eventually reached relatives in Aleppo.

When her mother later remarried, the new husband adopted Helen and gave her another name, Astrid Topalian. The family moved to Palestine where she later became a teacher in an Anglican elementary school in Haifa. Here she met and married Gaspar, whose own family were kaghakatsi, one of the oldest established Armenian families in Jerusalem. Gaspar studied evenings at the School of Law and qualified as a judge but by 1948 the birth pangs of the new state of Israel had reached a climax and fighting was all around them. The Chief of Police urged Gaspar to leave immediately. Stateless, the couple and their two small daughters waited a year in Amman and then sailed to Cyprus from where they hoped to arrange for Gaspar to continue his education in law in England. This proved impossible but thanks

to Gaspar's fluency in six languages, he was hired by the newly opened American Monitoring Station in Kyrenia and very slowly they began to build their own home. Sophie and Edessia commuted to the English School in Nicosia and in 1962, went to study art in England. In 1974, following a Greek-led coup against President Makarios, the Turkish army sent troops and established the current division of the island. Kyrenia was lost and all non-Turkish residents fled or were evacuated, leaving all property and belongings behind.

Sitting in her parents' living room many years later, Sophie is reminded of an Armenian film she saw



recently. "A couple had lost everything," she begins, "but they resettled and began to grow apple trees, just slowly putting in the seed and tending it in the wind and storms and actually protecting it until it grew. It was from absolute scratch." She turns to her parents, "Just as you have done so many times. It's as though my parents have made a little 'nation' here in Shoreham." Sophie and her husband Jim had lived in the same cottage after meeting as students at nearby Brighton College of Art. Soon after their daughter Neisha was born, Jim accepted a fellowship to set up the British Council printmaking workshop in his native Belfast. Sophie was drawn back into printmaking and began building a reputation. Friends Marie and Nobel Prize-winning poet Seamus Heaney put her in contact with author-poet Peter Balakian whose poetry Sophie later selected to accompany her work in an exhibit that combined artists, poetry and music. Balakian has reciprocated by choosing one of Sophie's prints for the cover of his latest book of poetry. Sophie is also included in the Great Book of Ireland, a modern version of the Book of Kells. "It is not really about being Irish, but being part of a certain milieu in a certain place," she says. "The distinctions are blurred."

Her current series of paintings, prints, and pastels are variations on reflections and refractions of light. Reviewers note the calm and serenity of the pieces but there is also a tension and contrast between the rich shadow and the delicate play of light. Neither her style nor the images she produces are part of any identifiable school or trend, something that pleases Sophie. Work is

done in a contemplative way, meaning "getting into a mood and getting excited about it, putting it on paper or canvas because you can't express it any other way. Art should reflect one's own experience of life." This latter is an afterthought to an earlier discussion on what Armenian art might mean today. "It can't be about what you think Armenian art might be or ought to look like," she says. At the same time their daughter Neisha's art work sometimes does contain obvious references to her Armenian ancestry including a delightful combination of old Armenian miniature style with a somewhat puzzled-looking portrait of her father as scribe. Today Neisha works in



mural painting, illustration and ceramics.

Later, in her home in Gloucestershire, Edessia took up the same thread, speaking about the very different backgrounds each generation in their family had and how she sees her own growing-up period as encompassing a mixture of cultures. "At home, it was Armenia, but our parents also talked about Palestine because that was in the very recent past. The neighbours were Greek and Turkish and we girls went to British schools. I always felt insecure about this. I always knew I was Armenian but never really met many Armenians in Kyrenia." When their father's work colleagues visited, themselves displaced Arabs, Persians, and others, the girls would take biscuits and drinks around to the guests and sit and listen to them talk about Palestine, about history and injustice. This was in stark contrast to the girls' own friendships and the stories they were hearing about England and America. The freedom and pleasures of these magic places grew in their imaginations until they went to study in London in 1962. "What could have been a more drastic culture shock than to go from Cyprus to an art school in England in the early 1960s?" laughs Edessia. Following art school Edessia worked as a theatrical prop maker and met her husband, Renzo Rapaccioli, while working on a set together. They have two children, Justine, now teaching English in Italy and conducting a choir at St Mark's in Venice. Laurence composes and releases his own dance music for club deejays.

Since 1982 Edessia has been working with wood, carving both familiar and fantastic figures. Most of the



sculptures are kinetic and she also makes all the necessary mechanisms. In 1989 Edessia won a "grand slam" at the annual British toymaker Guild Show, receiving three awards including Toymaker of the Year. Edessia says, "I feel the need to create pieces that express a state of being in a playful manner. I almost have a reluctance to do something entirely serious - but there is always a dark side as well." By making objects that move, Edessia requires input from the viewer who is really no longer a viewer but, in working the piece, actually participating in it. "My life is like a mosaic," she continues. "There have been so many influences, things to take into account. I feel very close to the Middle East, Palestine, but also to Armenians, the eastern Mediterranean, to Cyprus. We heard our mother's stories of massacres, of their losses in Palestine. But I was confident as a child and only later realized that confidence and insecurity were both there, doing battle inside."

When Astrid was small, she had a dress that was a sort of mosaic, a patchwork of 45 pieces of cloth gathered by the Bedouins from the clothes of victims of the Genocide and sewn by her mother. She later inherited her mother's wedding coat, sewn with golden threads on purple velvet by her father, a master tailor. Both pieces of clothing are lost now, with the other tangible pieces of family history. Their memory, however, illustrates vividly the many influences and experiences of the past, its beauty and its griefs.

Our youngest Benefactor: Hovig Tchilingirian



We would like to thank Hovig for generously accepting his parents' initiative of asking for donations to AI in lieu of gifts to celebrate his christening on 28 December. Thus far over £1100 has been contributed, to be used for activities of the Children's Corner. Two years ago the Armenian Institute was also the recipient of his parents Hratch and Shakeh Tchilingirian's wedding in-lieu-of-gifts donations.

THANK YOU

Thank you to all who have supported the Armenian Institute again this year, **Friends, Patrons and Benefactors**. We are very grateful for your continued encouragement and generosity. Our **2007 Benefactors were: Richard Anooshian, Krikor Didonian, Panos and Diana Katsouris, John and Christina Kurkjian. Shahe Guebenlian**, who died in 2007, has left a generous bequest as well as valuable books to the Armenian Institute. His generosity is greatly appreciated, as was his support and interest when he was alive.

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