

HYE SHARZHOOM

Armenian Action

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Year

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Supplement to The Collegian

Karekin II Elected 132nd Catholicos of All Armenians

By Barlow Der Mugrdechian
Hye Sharzhoom Advisor

The afternoon air was filled with excitement and anticipation on Wednesday, Oct. 27, 1999, as 452 delegates from more than 30 countries prepared to enter the doors of the sanctuary of Holy Etchmiadzin, to cast their ballots for the 132nd Catholicos of All Armenians.

One by one the delegates entered the Church as their names were called, each feeling the weight of responsibility as an elector who would decide the leader of the Armenian Church into the next millennium.

Presiding over the election were Archbishop Torkom Manoogian, Armenian Patriarch of Jerusalem, Archbishop Mesrob Mutafyan, Armenian Patriarch of Constantinople, and Archbishop Nerses Bozabalyan, Locum Tenens (interim head of the Armenian Church).

Hours later, His Holiness Karekin II Nersisian was elected as the new Catholicos of All Armenians, by a majority vote of 263 (226 votes were necessary for election on the first ballot). The only other candidate in the election, Archbishop Nerses Bozabalyan, received 176 votes, with 11 invalid



(standing left to right) His Beatitude Archbishop Mesrop Mutafyan, Patriarch of Constantinople; His Holiness Aram I, Catholicos of the Great House of Cilicia; and His Beatitude Archbishop Torkom Manoogian, Patriarch of Jerusalem, participate in the consecration ceremony of His Holiness Karekin II in the Cathedral of Holy Etchmiadzin.

photo by Mark Crosse, The Fresno Bee

votes.

The delegates had gathered at Etchmiadzin earlier in the week, to participate in the National Ecclesiastical Assembly, which began on Tuesday, Oct. 26. The Assembly had been convened to elect a successor to the late His Holiness Karekin I, Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians, who

had passed away on June 29, 1999. His Holiness' reign of a little more than four years as Catholicos — he had been elected in April of 1995 — was cut short by illness.

The National Ecclesiastical Assembly also had on its agenda a discussion of a draft constitution for the Armenian Church worldwide.

As a delegate elected from the Western Diocese of the Armenian Church of North America, I was privileged to participate in only the 3rd National Ecclesiastical Assembly held in the past 44 years. Although I had been to Armenia on several previous occasions, this was the first time that I participated in the election of a Catholicos. I was

two important milestone anniversaries: the 2000th anniversary of the birth of Jesus Christ celebrated in the year 2000 and the 1700th anniversary of the acceptance of Christianity as the state religion of Armenia in the year 2001. By this reasoning, a Catholicos had to be

See Catholicos, Page 8

Saroyan Statue to be Restored at Fresno State

By Matthew Maroot
Editor

A 30-foot-tall monument to Fresno's most prolific author, rescued in October from the wrecking ball, now rests behind the Conley Art Building at California State University, Fresno where it patiently awaits restoration.

This rusted configuration of twisted metal and decayed wood was once a shining tribute to the late author, playwright and Fresno native, William Saroyan. The statue titled, "Tribute to Saroyan," was created by the late Fresno artist, Varaz Samuelian. Samuelian, who was a close friend of Saroyan's, died in 1995 at age 78.

The statue, which features a stack of curiously arranged 4-foot-tall books by Saroyan beneath a large bronze sculpture of his head,

previously sat on a dirt lot at R Street and Mariposa Avenue in downtown Fresno. The lot was once home to the Varaz Modern Art Museum.

Community Medical Center, which now owns the lot, planned on demolishing the statue to make way for a parking area—plans that didn't sit well with those interested in preserving the work of local artists, including University President John Welty. "The statue represents a significant part of the cultural history of this area. It is important for the university to be committed to preserving art and culture," said Welty, whose phone call to a hospital administrator came to the rescue of a small group trying to save the statue.

That group included Dr. Dickran Kouymjian, Coordinator of the Fresno State Armenian Studies Program. "Dr. Welty played a crucial role at just the right mo-



Prof. Ed Gillum (left) and Dr. Dickran Kouymjian view the statue of William Saroyan created by artist Varaz Samuelian.

photo by Michael Harutinian

ment. He accepted without reservation that the statue come to Fresno State for restoring. He literally told university officials to simply 'Make it happen.' And it did," Kouymjian said.

Professor Ed Gillum of the Fresno State Art and Design Department will oversee the statue's restoration which will be done mainly by advanced art students.

See Statue, Page 8

ANC Names Dr. Kouymjian Man of the Year

The Armenian National Committee, Central California has named Dr. Dickran Kouymjian, director of the Armenian Studies Program at California State University, Fresno, as its "Man of the Year." Dr. Kouymjian is being honored for his contributions to the education of Armenian and non-Armenian students at Fresno State. He will be honored at a dinner on Sunday, March 5, 2000, at Tornino's restaurant. For more information, please call the ANC at (559) 486-1918.

Dr. Kouymjian was invited to Fresno from Paris in 1977 to establish a new Program in Armenian Studies at Fresno State. He reorganized the Armenian Students Or-

See Kouymjian, Page 7

California State University, Fresno
Armenian Studies Program

Spring 2000 Schedule of Courses

Course	Units	Time	Day	Instructor
General Education				
Division 9-Other Cultures				
(Social Sciences Area D3, for students using 1999/2000 Catalog)				
• Arm S 10 Intro to Arm Studies	3	0930-1045	TTh	Staff
• Arm S 10 Intro to Arm Studies	3	1000-1050	MWF	B. Der Mugrdechian
Division 7-Languages				
(Humanities Area C2, for students using 1999/2000 Catalog)				
• Arm 1B Elementary Armenian	4	1100-1150	MTWF	B. Der Mugrdechian
Division 6- Literature				
(Arts & Humanities, Area C, Integrative, for students using 1999/2000 Catalog)				
• Arm 148 Masterp. Arm Culture	3	0900-0950	MWF	B. Der Mugrdechian
Upper Division Courses				
• Arm S 106 Arm. in N. America	3	1100-1150	MWF	I. Kaprielian
• Arm S 108B Arm History II	3	0900-0950	MWF	I. Kaprielian
• Arm S 120T Armenian Church	1	1700-2200	Fri	B. Der Mugrdechian
		0900-1700	Sat	
Class meets the weekend of February 11 and 12				
• Arm S 120T Armenia Today	1	1700-2200	Fri	B. Der Mugrdechian
		0900-1700	Sat	
Class meets the weekend of March 31 and April 1				
• Arm S 123 Arm Architecture	3	1700-2200	Fri	D. Kouymjian
		0900-1700	Sat	
Class meets the weekends of February 25, 26 and March 3 and 4, and 10 and 11				
For more information call the Armenian Studies Program at (559) 278-2669 or visit our offices in the Peters Business Building, Room 384.				

Armenian Studies Program Faculty:

Dickran Kouymjian, *Haig and Isabel Berberian Professor of Armenian Studies, Coordinator*

Isabel Kaprielian, *Associate Professor, Department of History*

Barlow Der Mugrdechian, *Lecturer, ASO Advisor*

Frances C. Ziegler, *Program Administrative Assistant*

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HYE SHARZHOOM

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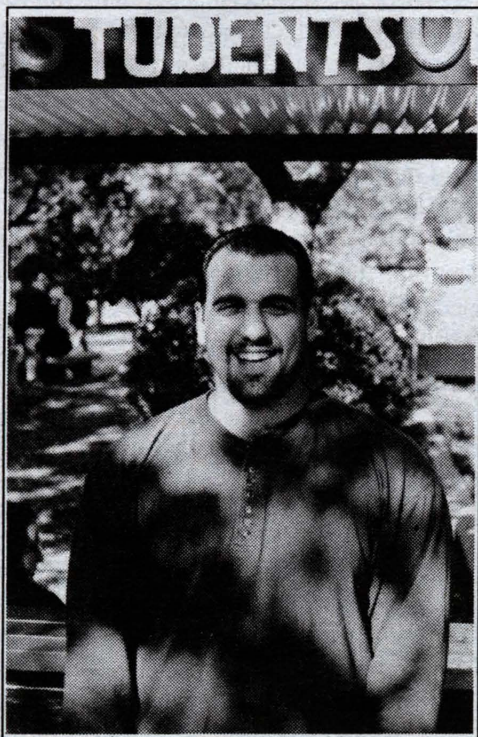
Armenian Students Organization President Chad Kirkorian will travel to Armenia in February where he will participate in an exchange program with Yerevan State University.

Kirkorian, who is also an Associated Students senator representing the College of Social Sciences, will study Armenian art history and language while in Armenia.

"Being in Armenia for five months is really going to be something special. I feel like the experience is going to solidify everything I have learned while attending Fresno State," Kirkorian said.

"I believe living in Armenia is the step which will assist me in placing my Armenian education into perspective," he said.

Kirkorian was recently inducted into the Honor Society of Phi Kappa Phi and is also a member of the Golden Key National Honor Society. He will graduate in May, 2000, with a bachelor of arts degree in history and a minor in Armenian Studies.



ASO President Chad Kirkorian
photo by Michael Harutinian

"Prior to earning my Armenian Studies minor, I knew I was Armenian, but I didn't truly know what it meant to be Armenian. After completing the coursework necessary for the minor, I have been exposed to many aspects of my Armenian culture and heritage. Nevertheless, I still lack firsthand knowledge of how Armenians live in a country which is all Armenian. This trip will allow me to reside in a country where I will have a total Armenian experience," Kirkorian said.

Warrant for Genocide

Key Elements of Turko-Armenian Conflict

By Vahakn N. Dadrian

A limited supply of autographed copies of the book are available through the Armenian Studies Program.

Special rate of \$33 per book.

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Ancient Papyrus Reveals Earliest Armenian Writing

By Arakel Arisian

Staff Writer

Among the many sources of ancient history, one that is often overlooked is the study of papyri or papyrology. On

The papyrus was first reported by Professor A. Carri in Paris in the 1890s. It then disappeared and as Dr. Clackson pointed out, was re-discovered at the Bibliothèque Nationale du France in 1992 by Kouymjian who has published three

The back side contains three tales about the philosopher Diogenes, more lists of words and other phrases and sayings. The sentences are crammed together and are very messy in some places.

Although Clackson has deciphered what the papyrus says, he is not certain of the identity of the person who wrote it or its purpose. Since it is written in Greek with Armenian letters, there are a limited number of possible uses of the papyrus. It was most likely used as some sort of tool to learn Greek. There are similar documents written in Greek and other languages, but they had both the words and their translations like a glossary. This text had only the words.

Even though the exact purpose is unknown, the document does give historians some concrete facts. It shows an Armenian presence in Egypt and in the Greek world. It also has linguistic value for both the Greek and Armenian languages. As the studies of Kouymjian have pointed out, the Armeno-Greek papyrus is also the oldest example of written Armenian we have, predating by several centuries the earliest surviving manuscripts.

Clackson has written a couple of major articles analyzing the language of the document and its importance to both Greek and Armenian language studies.



Dr. James Clackson

These, along with a complete transcription and translation, are in press. The lecture was an eye-opening experience to a different way to learn about history.

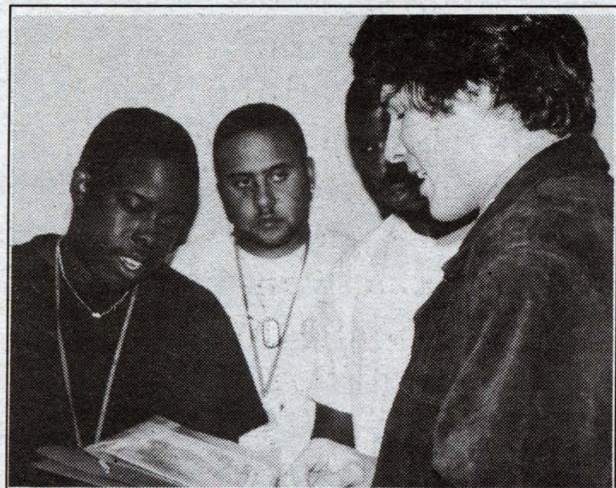
preliminary studies on it. Clackson and Kouymjian met through the internet in 1996 and have been collaborating ever since.

Most papyri are written in Greek and Egyptian; they contain literary texts and information about everyday life. They are found almost exclusively in Egypt, where

the climate is dry, thus preserving the documents. For decades, archaeologists have been digging up papyrus. Clackson pointed out this particular papyrus was found through an Arab papyrus dealer, thus it has no archaeological context. Everything known about the papyrus comes from document itself.

The papyrus has writing on both sides, but some parts are cut off or missing. It was found broken into many pieces and those pieces had to be put together like a puzzle. Originally, it was organized and photographed incorrectly. Clackson, a specialist in Greek and Armenian linguistics, was able to translate the text and rearrange the pieces correctly.

The front side of the document has Greek phrases, questions and answers, declensions and lists of words. In a very detailed manner, the writer wrote all of the body parts, words for military equipment and other lists of common words.



Three students from Dr. Kouymjian's Arts of Armenia class, left to right: Julian Galsco and Jameil Haddad from San Jose, Bayan Harris from Los Angeles ask Dr. Clackson questions after the lecture.

photos by Michael Harutinian

Thursday, Nov. 4, 1999, Dr. James Clackson, a Fellow of Cambridge University, gave a lecture titled, "An Armenian Learning Greek in Late Antique Egypt." Clackson spoke about a papyrus (the ancient equivalent of paper) from the 6th or early 7th century found in Egypt written in Armenian. Dr. Dickran Kouymjian who has a personal interest in the papyrus introduced him. The lecture was co-sponsored by the Armenian Studies Program, the Classics Program, the History Department, the Smittcamp Honors College, and the Armenian Students Organization.

This ancient papyrus is not only of interest to Armenian historians but also to classical scholars. The papyrus is written with Armenian script, but the entire text is in Greek. Among the hundreds of thousands of papyrus fragments discovered during the past century, it is the only one written with Armenian letters. It brings together a number of disciplines.

ASO Enjoys Busy, Exciting Semester

By Shayla Srabian

ASO Historian

The Armenian Students Organization was filled with hard work and fun.

The Armenian Students Organization held general meetings every two weeks. The meetings consisted of an overview of the budget and upcoming events. Most importantly, students were able to be together and work together.

In the month of October there was a shish-kebob sale, Halloween party, and two lectures hosted by the Armenian Studies Program.

ASO members cooked the pilaf, made the salad and barbecued

the shish-kebob for the sale on Oct. 24. The sale was held as part of the Tower Theatre Kef Time in the Tower District. Not only was a traditional Armenian meal pro-

and authentic Middle Eastern Belly Dancing.

The ASO ended the month of October with a Halloween party at Armén Karlozian's home. It was a festive evening beginning with a visit to the Haunted House followed by the Halloween party.

With the semester coming to a close students are busy getting ready for finals and the holidays. The ASO will be having a party to celebrate Christmas and the end of the semester.

The ASO worked hard this semester. They hoped to achieve student involvement and build friendships. Chad Kirkorian, who is the president of the ASO this fall semester, led the organization with energy. He is graduating this semester, we will miss him and wish him well. Thank you for all your hard work and dedication.



ASO members at Kef Time at the Tower.

vided, but there was also Armenian dancing. Richard Hagopian and his band played magically as people danced together. Cory Zamora and her dancers entertained the audience with their colorful costumes

Armenians and the Internet

By Ara Mekhitarian

Staff Writer

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Armenian History Quiz

By Michael Harutinian

Staff Writer

1) Which Armenian Dynasty emerged after the Arab invasions?

- | | |
|---------------|----------------|
| a) Mamikonian | c) Bagratuni |
| b) Arstruni | d) Artashesian |

2) What is the name of the Church on the island of Aghtamar?

- | | |
|-----------------|---------------|
| a) St. Gayane | c) St. Varvar |
| b) St. Hripsime | d) Holy Cross |

3) Who was the first President of an independent Armenia?

- | | |
|--------------------------|------------------|
| a) Hovhannes Kachaznuni | c) Aram Manukian |
| b) Levon Ter- Petrossian | d) Armen Garo |

4) What city was the Armenian National Council first held in?

- | | |
|------------|----------|
| a) Yerevan | c) Garin |
| b) Tiflis | d) Kars |

5) How many delegates voted in the 1999 election of a Catholicos?

- | | |
|--------|--------|
| a) 325 | c) 452 |
| b) 250 | d) 425 |

Answers: 1.) c 2.) d 3.) a 4.) b 5.) c

Assassinations Shock Armenia; Prime Minister Slain in Parliament

In a series of articles, Fresno Bee reporter Michael Krikorian and photographer Mark Crosse provided in-depth coverage of the election of His Holiness Karekin II, Catholicos of All Armenians, and also covered the assassination of top officials in the Armenian government.

Krikorian and Crosse were the only American reporters in Armenia covering the election of the Catholicos and subsequent events.

See all of the Fresno Bee articles and accompanying photos on the Fresno Bee website: www.fresnobee.com.

The following story, reprinted with permission, first appeared in the Oct. 28, 1999, edition of The Fresno Bee.

By Michael Krikorian
The Fresno Bee

YEREVAN, Armenia — Within a few minutes and a few miles from where the Armenian church selected its new pontiff, gunmen with automatic weapons burst into the capital's parliament Wednesday [Oct. 26] and assassinated the prime minister and seven government officials, adding another bloody chapter to the history of this embattled, ancient land.

The attackers surrendered early today, releasing dozens of hostages, after coming to terms with the nation's president, officials said.

Vazgen Sarkisian, 40, considered the most powerful politician in Armenia, was gunned down

shortly after 4 p.m. (5 a.m. PDT) [Oct. 26] when four or five men armed with AK-47s calmly opened fire in a bloodbath captured live by government television cameras.

Nearly 18 hours later, the gunmen gave up their weapons and were taken by police to the Ministry of the Interior for questioning, according to the president's office.

The breakthrough came after President Robert Kocharian negotiated with the gunmen's leader and promised they would be given a fair trial.

There was no immediate word on the condition of the hostages, mainly lawmakers and senior officials, who had been held overnight in the parliament building.

"It's over. It's over," said Antranig Hovanesian, spokesman for the Foreign Ministry.

The shooting occurred about an hour before delegates from around the world, including Fresno, selected Karekin Nersessian as the next Catholicos of All Armenians. The election took place about 10 miles from the parliament at the 4th century church of Holy Etchmiadzin.

"Oh my God," I don't believe this is happening," said Shakeh Karakashian, of the delegation from Fresno.

"On this day of all days. How sad."

Also confirmed dead in the attack were Parliament Speaker Karen Demirchian, Energy Minister Leonid Petrosian, Yuri Bakhsian, a senior minister, and at least three members of parliament, authorities said.

Hundreds of soldiers and dozens of armored personnel carriers ringed the government complex on Marshall Bagramian Street.

The attackers said their actions were "patriotic" and that the government had failed its people, a released hostage said.

Two hours after the shooting began, two badly shaken hostages were released and quickly whisked away.

moment that brought Karekin II to tears. The election process was over, and the announcement was made along with the cheerful ringing of the church bells. Karekin II began his moving speech in which he thanked many people and spoke about his main goal of unifying the Armenian Church.

Professor Der Mugrdechian presented a video for the lecture audience showing the election process and the moment at which Karekin II was elected. The video brought the ceremony to life and included footage when Karekin II was notified of the Armenian Parliament assassinations.

By now the church doors were opened and horrifying news fil-



Soldiers carry the body of Prime Minister Vazgen Sarkisian to the Yerablour Cemetery.

photo by Mark Crosse, The Fresno Bee

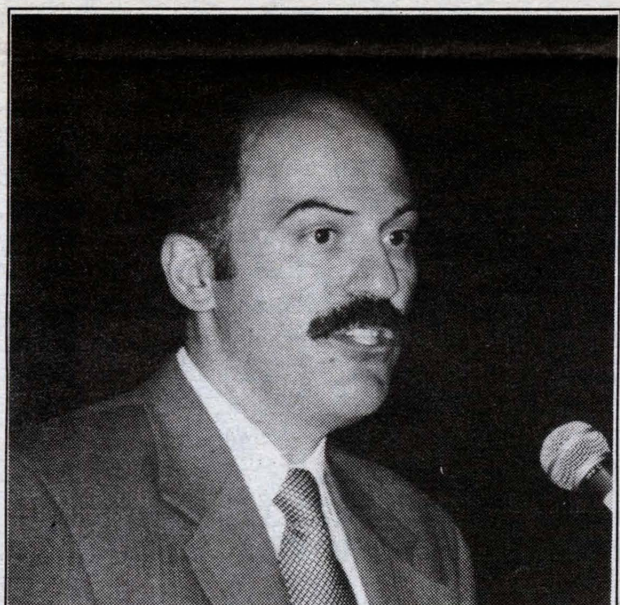
Der Mugrdechian Reflects on Election of Catholicos

By Shushan Khalachyan
Staff Writer

The recent election of the Catholicos was not just an average one. Following the recent death of His Holiness, Catholicos Karekin I, on June 29, 1999, the Supreme Spiritual Coun-

reported his eyewitness accounts depicting what happened on a day by day basis.

On Tuesday, Oct. 26, 1999, delegates gathered at Holy Etchmiadzin to participate in the Divine Liturgy service and to take Holy Communion followed by a special requiem service for the late Karekin I.



Barlow Der Mugrdechian

photo by Michael Harutinian

At 2:00 p.m. that afternoon the delegate registration process began. There was an enthusiasm in the air and excitement among the people. No one knew exactly what to expect. All were anxiously waiting.

On Wednesday morning, Oct.

27, the delegates noticed the first evidence of politicking. There was a mini-demonstration promoting one of the candidates. That morning the final candidates were nominated. Forty-seven bishops were eligible to become Catholicos, but only two candidates accepted the nomination. The two candidates were Archbishop Nerses Bozabalian, who was the Locum Tenens, and Archbishop Karekin Nersessian, who was head of the Araratian Diocese. At 2:30 p.m. the delegates started to enter the church one by one and once they were all in, the doors were locked. Now the election process could begin.

The delegates were to vote and place their ballots inside a large wooden box. This process took about two and a half hours. Each ballot was then read out loud. At 6:30 p.m. the new Catholicos of all Armenians was announced. Archbishop Karekin Nersessian was now the 132nd Catholicos of all Armenians. This was a very emotional

cil voted to hold the election of the new Catholicos from Oct. 26-31, 1999. According to tradition, the election must be held between six months and one year after the death of the Catholicos. In this case there was no waiting. The Armenian people needed a new Catholicos as soon as possible because of the important upcoming events in the Armenian Church.

In total, 452 delegates were chosen from all over the world to participate in this very special election. Barlow Der Mugrdechian of the California State University, Fresno Armenian Studies Program, was one of the five delegates chosen from Central California to go to the Church of Holy Etchmiadzin to participate in the election process. After he returned from his exciting trip, he gave a lecture titled, "The Election of a Catholicos: A Report," on Nov. 16, 1999. Der Mugrdechian detailed his experience in Armenia. His lecture was brought to life with slides and a video. Professor Der Mugrdechian

Although the city was stunned by the shootings, there was no panic in the streets.

The public was allowed to watch the scene from across the street, and members of the media strolled in the middle of the street less than 15 feet from the gates of the compound.

Though the gunmen claimed their actions were the beginning of a coup d'etat that would topple the government, no one seemed to be taking that claim seriously.

"That this is a coup d'etat is ridiculous," said Vahe Gabrielian, press secretary for Kocharian. "This is just the act of a handful of individuals."

The gunmen, at least two of them wearing overcoats and berets, charged into the meeting while members of parliament were questioning government ministers on a range of issues, including the peace process with neighboring Azerbaijan over the disputed region of Nagorno-Karabakh.

One of the gunmen, a former journalist named Nairi Hounanian, began cursing and yelling as he entered the chambers.

"These people have sucked on our blood," Hounanian said as he unleashed a torrent of death from his Automatic Kalashnikov-47, according to a local reporter who was covering the parliament meeting.

Throughout the night, on a street nicknamed Shish Kebab Lane, the talk was of the shootings, but the action was of eating and

drinking.

The restaurants were full of people. At the bar of the city's premier hotel, it was all cognac, coffee and conversation.

However, if there was a television nearby, it was tuned to the news.

Kocharian was sped to the parliament building after he heard of the shootings and was said to be organizing the security forces. Armenian commandos, veterans from the war in Nagorno-Karabagh, were on the scene, and snipers were in position on nearby roofs.

One of the largest questions looming alongside the why of it was the how of it: How could four or five men with Kalashnikov assault rifles enter the parliament of a country that has been rocked by violence throughout its history?

One government official from the foreign ministry office, speaking on condition of anonymity, said that though Armenia has been in countless wars, this kind of violence was rare.

"We don't have this kind of shooting here," he said. "But obviously, we are going to look into how this could happen."

Russian President Boris Yeltsin canceled his vacation on the Black Sea and returned to Moscow, where he denounced the killings.

Hounanian, 34, who sources said was a rabble rouser as a student at Yerevan State University,

See Assassinations, Page 6

The murders in the government had a definite effect on the Armenian people and on the events that were to take place for the new Catholicos. His consecration ceremony was to be held on Sunday, Oct. 31, but was postponed because of the funeral services taking place. A day of happiness and celebration turned into a day of sadness. This created a contrast of emotions for the Armenian people. He was not consecrated until the following Thursday in a very elaborate ceremony. The lecture was followed by a question and answer session during which members from the large crowd inquired about Der Mugrdechian's experience.

Commentary — What Makes an Armenian an Armenian?

By **Hasmik Khalachyan-Cañas**

Staff Writer

Can a person be only one-half Armenian? Which side would be the Armenian side, the left or the right? If the left side is the Armenian side, would that make the right arm and right leg the *odar* (non-Armenian) side? Further more, how can a person be one-quarter or one-third Armenian? I don't know about you but I have never seen one-third of a person walking down the street. As for the term *odar*, who thought of it? As if the world consists of Armenians and others (what ever they may be). Is a full-blooded Armenian better than a partial-blooded Armenian? Is there such a thing as a full-blooded Armenian? All these questions boil down to the question of what an Armenian is.

Some may think that if your parents are Armenian, then you are also an Armenian. I do not agree with this statement. There are many individuals who are the product of two Armenians, but do not even themselves consider them to be Armenians. Then what is an Armenian? I believe that an Armenian is a person who is educated about Armenia and Armenians, a person who is active in the Armenian com-

munity (wherever he or she may live) and is involved in Armenian issues. There are many individuals who are not full-blooded Armenians, but are more educated and involved with Armenian issues than those who are full-blooded Armenians.

There is no logic in judging a person by what their parents are because obviously that person is a separate individual from his or her parents. The issue about the location of one's birth is also not a factor in determining whether one is an Armenian or not. I, for example, was born in Yerevan, Armenia, and both of my parents are Armenian, but that is not what makes me an Armenian.

An overwhelming majority of my life has been spent here in America, but I have always been surrounded by a large Armenian community. I have never lost my language and continue to speak with my family in Armenian. I have also maintained the basic Armenian culture through a variety of means such as church, music, dance and of course, Armenian food. Being an Armenian is also a continuous learning process, not only about one's culture, but about the world because one thing affects

another. There is a lot I still don't know about Armenians, but I am learning.

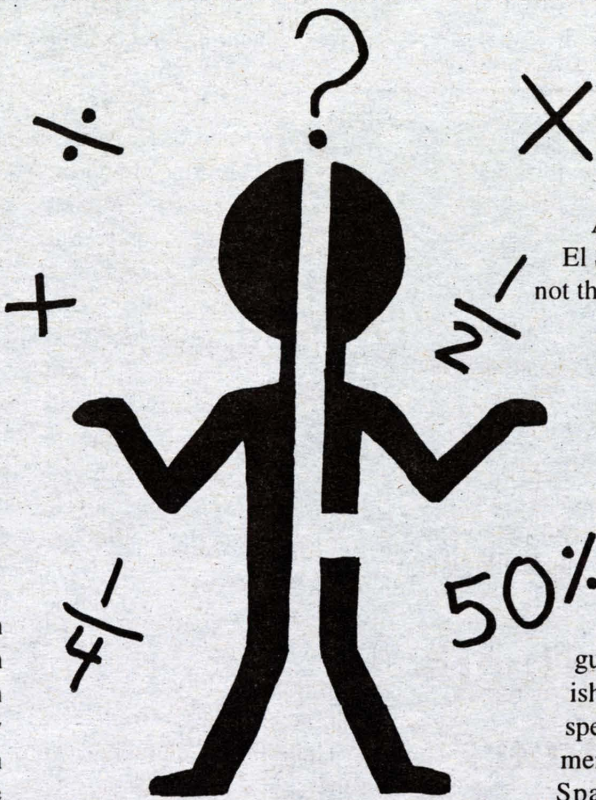
What about an individual who does not come from two Armenian

have a son that many call a half-Armenian because my husband is not an Armenian by biological definitions. His father was Arabic and his mother is El Salvadoran. A

mathematical definition of my son would be considered 50 percent Armenian, 25 percent Arab and 25 percent El Salvadoran, but I do not think that is the case. My son, Razmik, is only two and a half years old, but he is fully immersed in three separate and converging cultures. He is a balanced tri-lingual (Armenian, Spanish and English). He speaks with me in Armenian, to his father in Spanish and to his American friends in English. There is no confusion in languages. Sometimes

There is a terrible myth, and I emphasize myth, that an individual must sacrifice one language for another. This is not true. There are many linguistic studies done that prove that a child who is a balanced bilingual is more cognitively advanced than a monolingual child of the same age. There is no such thing as a limited amount of room in the brain for language. Razmik knows the alphabet and counts in all three languages. He is accepted and involved in all three communities. I do not think of him as less than a full Armenian, full American and full El Salvadoran. Does that make him three different people? I don't think so. Razmik is just one of many multicultural individuals like him.

I think that it is vital that we judge individuals as individuals without referring to biological or mathematical formulas for a definition of someone that is standing in front of you. An individual is an individual and that is always more than just the sum of his or her parts. A person is one whole person; they should not and cannot be divided into parts, which will not function without each other. Armenianness is a spirit that can be inherent within anybody without any biological explanations.



THERE IS NO FORMULA

illustration by *Hasmik Khalachyan-Cañas*

parents? Does that make them less of an Armenian? I don't think so. I

Razmik will also translate for us if we do not understand something.

Scholars Discuss Adana Massacres of 1909 at Fresno State Conference

By **John Jabaghourian**

Staff Writer

Four scholars specializing in Armenian history presented papers on various issues surrounding the Adana massacres of 1909 at a conference sponsored by the Armenian Studies Program, Armenian Students Organization and Armenian National Committee of Central California. The conference titled, "The Armenian Massacres of Adana (1909-1999): Ninety

specialist on the Ottoman Empire from the European University Institute, Florence and Dr. Gregory Goekjian, Professor of English at Portland State University.

Topics covered the general background and precursors of the massacres, the effects of the massacres on the Armenian populated regions surrounding Adana, the politics that drove the victim relief efforts and arguments of the Turkish denial of these events now 90 years later.

The Adana region was a rich agricultural area in the Ottoman Empire. A large, booming and industrious city, Adana was home to many Armenians and a temporary home to many migrant workers. In April of 1909, 30,000 Armenians were killed, others tortured, raped and abducted, homes and shops looted and destroyed, farms pillaged, tools and equipment damaged and churches burned. And this after a new constitution was ratified in the Empire that was to relieve Armenian fears after the murderous and tyrannical massacres of Abdul Hamid II in 1894-96.

"Of the tradition of Armenian massacres and Genocide, and what a terrible tradition it is, [Adana lies] in the middle and is the one that is the most forgotten," said Dickran Kouymjian, coordinator of the conference and Director of the Armenian Studies Program at Fresno State.

Aram Arkun was the first presenter and said, "It is very important to understand the whole series of events that took place in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries." He brought forward a number of emerging con-

flicts between the Armenians and Muslims as the new democratic constitution replaced the old regime of the Sultan and gave power to the Committee of Union And Progress (CUP).

"The new [local] branches of the CUP formed in Cilicia frequently included notables and opportunistic pillars of the old regime working for their own personal interest," Arkun said. Armenians grew dissatisfied with the new regime as it looked more and more like the tyrannical one of the Sultan.

Further problems of the Empire created dissatisfaction on the part of the Ottomans with the new regime and rumors were spread that Armenians were responsible for this state of affairs. Tension arose among Armenians and Muslims on the eve of April 9th when the massacres began.

According to Dr. Shemmashian, "The Armenian presence at the turn of the century in Northwest Syria constituted an extension of the larger Armenian habitation of Cilicia to the north."

He showed how the massacres were not confined to Adana but spread to the surrounding regions affecting four major Armenian concentrations of Alexandretta, Beylan, Antioch and Jisr el-

were to gain a sphere of influence in the Ottoman Empire, and relief was an investment for future endeavors, like abusing relief money and building institutions like hospitals that otherwise could not be built.

Dr. Goekjian raised many aspects of Turkish denial of massacre including calling it an Armenian massacre of the Turks. "The Turkish position attempts to make the Armenians aggressors when in fact they were the victims," Goekjian said. "Turkish rhetoric is that although Armenians were

the ones who died in the massacres, Turks were the real victims," he added.

Dr. Goekjian provided a number of facts that demonstrate these claims are wrong and unsupported. He also warned of the Turkish attempt to make the Genocide of 1915-1922 just another "massacre" and to justify this position by the same reasoning.

"Adana is the best example of the difference between massacre and Genocide," said Goekjian, defending his position that there was



Dr. Vahram Shemmashian (left) speaking with Mr. Sarkis Sahatdjian.

photo by *Bazlow Der Mugrdechian*

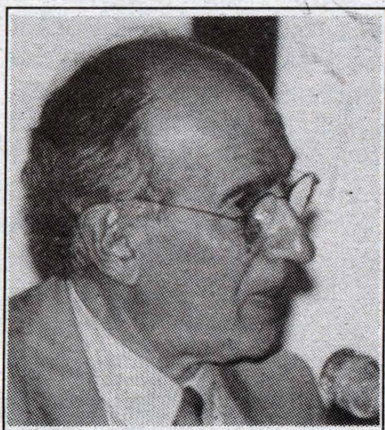
Shughur. This resulted in the murder of 15,000 Armenians. The aftermath of the massacres left the surviving Armenians destitute and brought many international relief agencies to the area. Hilmar Kaiser discussed the politics behind relief and suggested that these agencies were in competition. "Relief efforts are possibly more directed by political ends than by the need of the sufferers," he said.

"Nice people have their own agendas and ideologies," Kaiser continued. According to him much of those agendas and ideologies



Aram Arkun

photo by *Michael Harutinian*



Dr. Dickran Kouymjian

photo by *Michael Harutinian*

Years Later," was held at California State University, Fresno on Oct. 9, 1999.

"It is important to realize history is not just the past, and in fact it is this tragedy of Adana that has had a tremendous impact on the Fresno community years later," said Luis Costa, Dean of the College of Arts and Humanities, who opened the conference.

The speakers of the conference were Aram Arkun, a specialist in modern Armenian history from New York, Dr. Vahram Shemmashian, Principal of the Merdian School in Los Angeles, Hilmar Kaiser, a researcher and

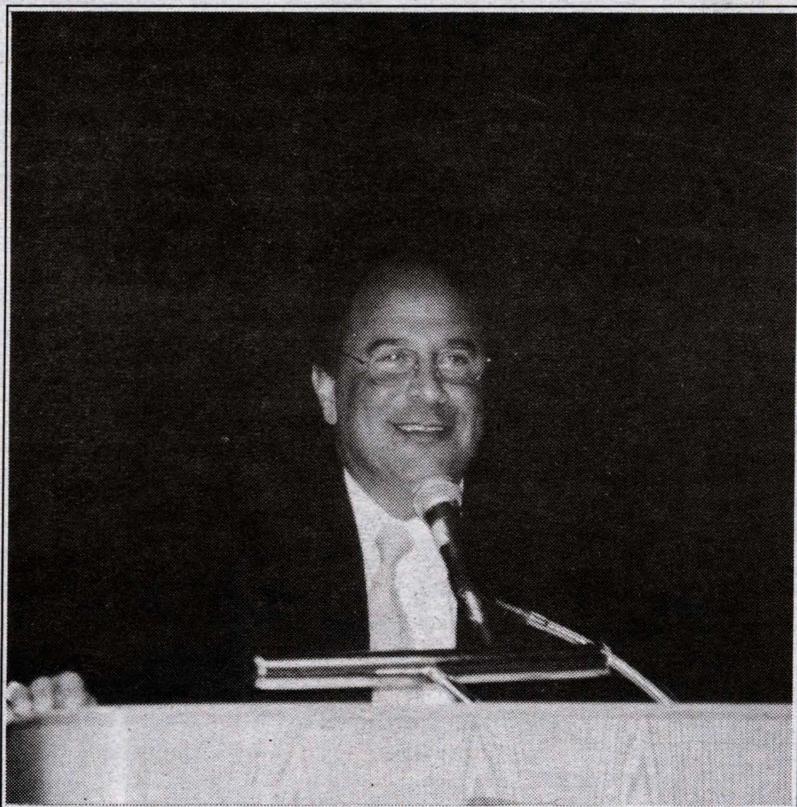
Emmy Award Winner Hank Saroyan Guest at ASP Banquet

By Shayla Srabian
Staff Writer

Emmy Award Winner Hank Saroyan was the special guest of the Armenian Stud-

ies Program at their 14th Annual Banquet on Oct. 10, 1999. The evening began with a reception followed by a filet mignon dinner.

Dr. Dickran Kouymjian made the introductions, which included University President John Welty. President Welty complimented the Armenian Studies Program and its supporters by saying, "You should be very proud and I am grateful of your help, because the students that are with you tonight are beneficiaries of what you've done, a special thank you to everyone who has worked to make this program successful."



Hank Saroyan

photo by Shayla Srabian

Hank Saroyan, nephew of the writer William Saroyan, was back by popular demand after a well-received appearance at last spring's "Saroyan At Ninety" convention. "Like his cousins and his uncle,

specialized in family entertainment. He was the driving force behind the CBS series, "Jim Henson's Muppet Babies," winning nine Emmy Awards. He received an Emmy Award for outstanding direction for his short film, "The Parsley Garden." He wrote, produced and directed "Geo Kids," for the National Geographic Magazine. This year he produced the "Prism Awards," given to the most accurate description of substance abuse in the media.

Hank Saroyan spoke on "Madness in the Family? You Bet" Saroyan said he always felt burdened by an odd sensibility, that drove his friends, his family and his employers to become truly insane and concluded that this

must be a common behavior among the Saroyan clan. Saroyan said this "madness" goes back to his grammar school days, when for example, he was asked to color a picture of oranges and apples. He thought it

was "stupid" and left school that day at recess. He arrived at home and told his mother he never wanted to return to school because it was "stupid." His father surprisingly came home at noon and gave him a "high volume Armenian lecture" in the Saroyan manner. He persuaded his son to go back to school with him. His father convinced the principal to put him in a higher grade because he was afraid his son would quit school like his brother Bill. The story ends by Hank skipping a grade and successfully completing his education. This was one of the first experiences of "Madness in the Family" for Hank. His delivery was charmingly comical and heartwarming.

Lynn Vartan provided the musical entertainment for the evening. She is an active percussionist in Southern California. Vartan received her initial training at Roosevelt High School of fine arts in Fresno. She earned her bachelor's degree at California State University, Northridge. She is now completing her master's

degree in percussion at the University of Southern California. For the last eight years she has taught instrumental music and percussion at Thousand Oaks High School in Los Angeles, Calif. This is where she also directs the percussion program. Her students have won many honors. For the banquet she played a number of diverse pieces from Bach to Khachadourian. Vartan played with passion, grace and expertise.

The night ended with Professor Barlow Der Mugrdchian hon-



Lynn Vartan

photo by Michael Harutinian

oring the recipients of scholarships given by the Armenian Studies Program. The evening was fun-filled with joy, laughter and entertainment. His Holiness, Aram I, Catholicos of the Great House of Cilicia will be the honored guest at next year's 15th Annual Banquet.

Life is in the Loom

By Y. Stephan Bulbulian
Special to Hye Sharzhoom

"Unhappy is the poor spinner who leaves her skeins at the riverside to dry and finds them gone."

Her spinning wheel sings a light-hearted song of the women who could not choose a husband. The thread she spins by drawing and twisting is determined by fate, woven and bound to happen. As a newborn, the 3 Fates visit her cradle, delivering the girl-child's future; order, peace and destiny. The material with which her life is loomed is elongated and fine little threads; strong as cable. Her father's praise and perfect schoolwork, she weaves into her life, a web of happiness. She is descended from the order who guards the hearth, the light of the fire, the heart of the household. Secretly vowing never to marry; a bride of Christ like Rhipsime and Gayane, she is the bridge between heaven and mother. Magical and mysterious, a martyr slain for her faith. There is no happiness in life so perfect. On the goodness value: she rates a hundred, never lower than a slave in subjugation. She cooks and cleans, washes and spins, sews and mends, her fine thread easily parts as the large needle passes through. Unlike her Uncle, whose fate was assigned a short thread, unstrung, of all the different parts of the family legend, the essential connection between her devotion and her rites she keeps secret from men. If only men knew how women pass the time alone, days come and days go, they would never marry. Her lonely impulse of delight, her blissful hands sew a fine seam. She would marry the best man on earth today, if only she were much younger.

Assassinations, Cont. from Page 4

in the 1980s, is a former member of the Dashnak political party.

However, the Dashnaks, who are not in power in the Yerevan government, kicked out Hounanian because he was said to be "immoral," a source said.

Other than Hounanian, the identities of the other shooters were not known.

Armenia has been plagued by a variety of economic woes and blockades stemming from its victory over Azerbaijan in Nagorno-Karabakh.

On the streets of the city, the mood ranged from tears to disdain for the fallen leadership.

"They were victims, but in same ways, it was just," said Emmea Kaprielian, 70, who blamed the government for the lack of jobs. But just down the street, another man was in tears. He had lost a friend when parliament member Armenag Armengian was gunned down.

"He didn't have anything in his hands, and they just shot him," said Albert Movsessian, a member of the writers union.

"I can't imagine anyone being that crazy to just go in and start killing everyone," said Seda Melkonian, wife of the late, legendary Armenian army commander Monte Melkonian of Visalia, the hero of the war in Karabagh.

Local television replayed the scene in which the gunmen appear to fire randomly with the AK-47s as parliament members duck behind desks. Sources said the prime

minister was the main target and was fired upon from about 6 feet away.

The shooting brought a tragic note to what had been a beautifully spiritual day in this country as Nersessian, the archbishop of the largest diocese in Armenia, was selected to lead the Armenian Apostolic Church as catholicos.

The joy of the occasion, however, turned ominous when, at the church of Holy Etchmiadzin, when only delegates and candidates were allowed inside, rumors began to circulate in the church courtyard that there had been a shooting at the parliament.

Dozens of journalists covering the election left the serene setting and rushed to the chaotic scene outside the parliament.

Sarkisian, who took office in June, was the country's former defense minister and is said to be far more powerful than the country's president. He was said to be firm on Armenia's position of Karabagh, not wanting to return any seized land to Azerbaijan.

The foreign minister of Azerbaijan, Tofik Joulfougarov, resigned Monday over what was said to be a disagreement over his country's president.

The Azerbaijan government has been under intense pressure and criticism for losing the war in the early and mid-1990s against the Armenians in Karabagh.

Many blamed the Armenian government's poor performance on having been under the influence of the Soviet's communism system for too long.

"The communism was in the government's blood for 70 years and it's going to take a generation to get it out," said Dr. Rostom Hrant Nakashian from Amman, Jordan.

The Armenian people have been rocked by unemployment rates said to soar as high as 50%. And many of those who do work are paid extremely low wages. Ella Malkhassyan, an English school-teacher, earns \$30 a month.

"It may be nice in the city, nice restaurant people, well-dressed, but you go outside the central city and things are very bad and the government has not been doing anything for them," said Malkhassyan. "I wish the catholicos was running the country. You go outside and take a look."

Indeed, on the outskirts of the city, away from the tree-lined avenues and sidewalk cafes, people live in grim conditions.

Less than 10 minutes from the parliament is a complex of high-rise housing projects that make the notorious Cabrini Green housing project in Chicago seem cozy.

Known as "Bangladesh" because of its desperate living conditions, it is said to be a breeding ground for people who hate the government.

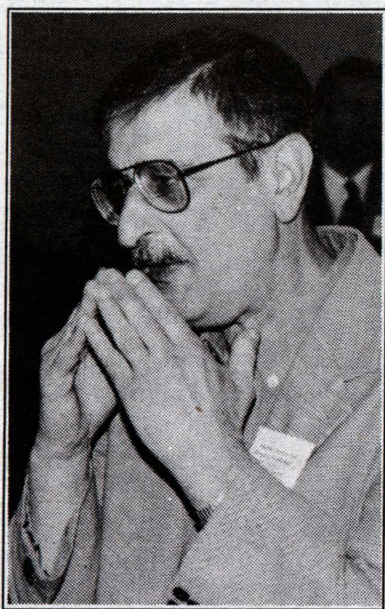
A state funeral for the shooting victims is expected to be held Saturday [Oct. 30], one day before the scheduled ceremony to install the new catholicos.

"This was supposed to be a day to celebrate, a day to rejoice," said Gohar Avakian, a hotel worker.

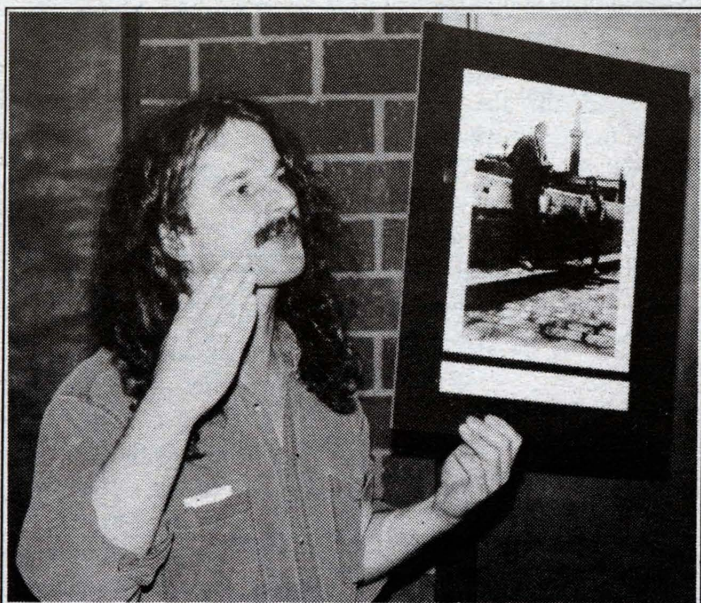
"Instead, it's just another day to cry."

Adana Conference, Cont. from Page 5

no evidence that the Adana massacres were planned, but that the



Dr Gregory Goekjian
photo by Michael Harutonian



Hilmar Kaiser explains a photographic exhibit featuring rare archival scenes of Adana held in conjunction with the Conference.

The photographic exhibit is part of the Gomidas Institute Outreach Program and the photographs are reproduced with permission from the Ernst Jackh Papers, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University.

photo by Michael Harutonian

Genocide of 1915 was a premeditated attack to exterminate.

It is through this position that the Turks are trying to pass the Genocide off as a massacre that

Kouymjian, Cont. from Page 1

ganization and founded the Armenian student newspaper, Hye Sharzhoom, in 1978-79, and in 1985 the Center for Armenian Studies. Since 1988 he has served as the first incumbent of the Haig & Isabel Berberian Endowed Chair of Armenian Studies at Fresno State.

Dr. Kouymjian has had a varied professional career. Though at Fresno State since 1977, Dr. Kouymjian has also taught elsewhere. In 1987 he was awarded a Fulbright Senior Lectureship by the United States government to teach

conferences like these are needed to inform people and allow them to differentiate the 1909 massacres and the 1915 Genocide as separate terrors against the Armenians.

in the Department of Foreign Languages and Literature at Yerevan State University in Armenia. He was instrumental in establishing the Exchange Program between Yerevan State and Fresno State. From 1988-1991 he was Director of the Armenian Department and occupied the Chair of Armenian at the Institute for Oriental Languages (INALCO) of the University of Paris.

In 1986 he was elected "Outstanding Professor of the Year," by the faculty at California State University, Fresno, and in 1999 he was the first recipient of the Provost's

The Adana conference was part of the Armenian Studies Program's Lecture Series of the 1999-2000 academic year.

Award for Excellence in Teaching in the newly established category of "Outstanding Achievements in Research."

In 1996 he received encyclicals from both His Holiness Aram I, Catholicos of the Great House of Cilicia, and the late Karekin I, Catholicos of All Armenians, for his work in Armenian Studies. Catholicos Karekin also honored him with the St. Sahag and St. Mesrob medal, the highest honor bestowed by the Armenian Church to scholars and writers.

Historic Armenia Today: Surviving Monuments

By Jennifer Keledjian
Staff Writer

According to Dr. Dickran Kouymjian, neglecting to protect surviving monuments in historic Armenia is like "putting the final dot over the 'T' in genocide." He believes that these monuments are in need of recognition in order that they survive in historic Armenia. If they are not

nearby modern city of Van, run by the Islamic community, that has displayed in its gardens carved stones with Armenian inscriptions and crosses. Inside the museum, a case of books denying the existence of the Armenian genocide stands next to what are supposed to be bones of Turks, which according to the notice, were killed during the "Armenian genocide of the Turks."



From left to right: Aghavni, tour guide from Istanbul, Gladys Peters of Fresno, Sonia Harlan of Chicago, Prof. Robert Hewsen from Rowan College of New Jersey, Angèle Kouymjian, Prof. Dickran Kouymjian, June Shamshoian of Fresno, Annette Gurjian of Eugene, Ore., and the organizer and leader of the trip, Armen Aroyan of Los Angeles.

photo courtesy of Gladys Peters

cared for, they will soon completely disappear.

These were some of the topics and thoughts of the lecture, "Historic Armenia Today: A Report on Surviving Monuments," given on Oct. 21, 1999. Eager students and adults filled the Alice Peters Auditorium at Fresno State as Dr. Kouymjian took the audience through a slide show tour of his trip to Turkey over the summer.

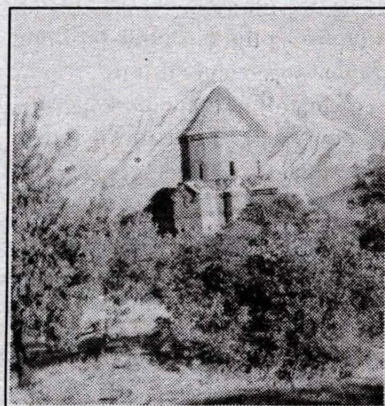
Armen Aroyan, leader of the tour, who came from Los Angeles to attend the lecture, has made over 30 trips to Turkey, taking tourists to cities they wish to visit. Last summer, a group of seven Armenians, including Dr. and Mrs. Kouymjian, led by Aroyan, started their journey in Istanbul and traveled through Izmir, Cappadocia, around Lake Van, Ani, Kars, the Black Sea, Trebizond, Samsun and back to Istanbul.

The lecture began with the group's visit to the church of the Holy Cross at Aghtamar, located on a small island on Lake Van. Aghtamar is an early 10th century church built by King Gagik. Although this church has missing roof tiles and a damaged dome, it has a most unique and exceptional aspect: external relief sculpture with scenes of the Old Testament. The inside of the church tells the story of the New Testament through frescoes.

In Van, the group visited several ruined Armenian churches, such as The Mother of God church, which are crumbling away while two mosques have benefited from restoration by Turkish authorities. The outskirts of the city include a portion of the city walls (now destroyed) and the Rock of Van. There is a museum in the

The group visited St. Bartholomew Church, which is now converted into a military zone 50 miles east of Van. Although in ruins, this church is used as a military post against the Kurds. The group continued onto Soradir, and visited the church named after Holy Etchmiadzin dating to the late 6th century one of the oldest Armenian churches.

Concluding the lecture, Kouymjian spoke about the Old Cathedral of Kars, built in the 10th

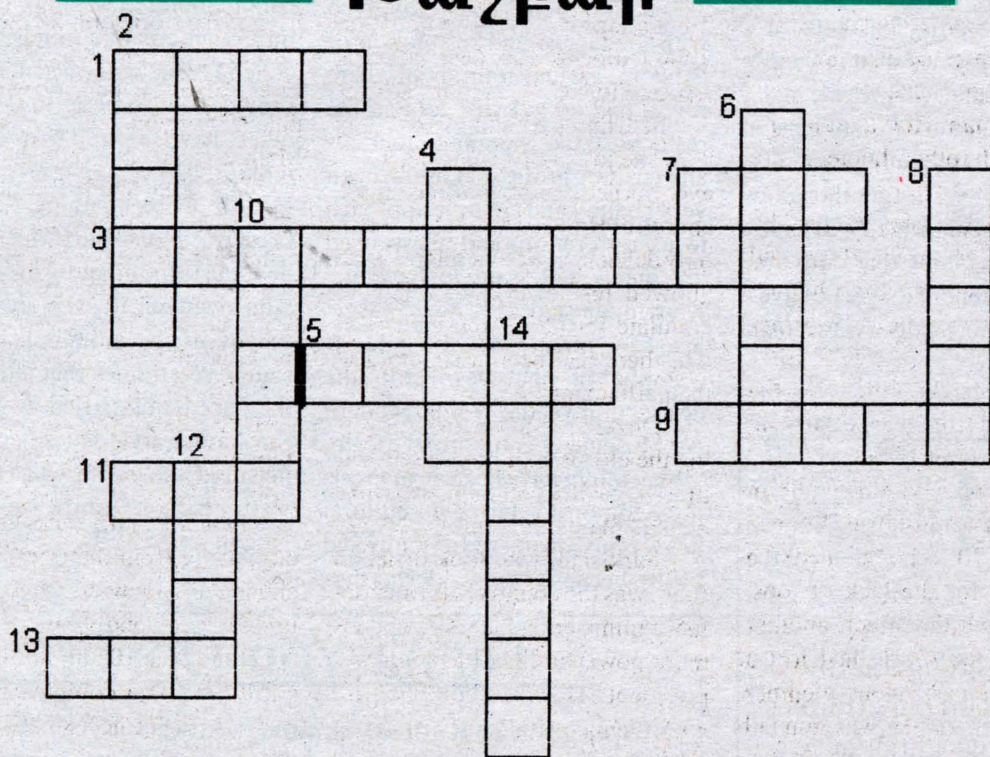


Church of the Holy Cross on the island of Aghtamar.
photo courtesy of Gladys Peters

century, and finally on the walls and Cathedral of Ani, the medieval capital of Armenia. The Cathedral, unique for its cluster columns and pointed arches, was built around the year 1000. The early 10th century walls of Ani still exist in all their splendor along the entrance to the city and are currently being restored by the Turks.

The detailed slide show and description of each site was an excellent way for students and adults to take a short tour through Eastern Turkey and to visit the surviving monuments of historic Armenia.

Խաչբար



Պատրաստեց՝ Արմեն Գարիգեան

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Catholicos, Cont. from Page 1

elected and consecrated to lead the Church and the people into the 21st century.

In addition, Armenia and the Diaspora need continued spiritual renewal, especially in Armenia, where 70 years of communist rule had severely impacted Christianity and the Church, and in the Diaspora, where administrative differences have substantially affected many communities, especially in the United States. His Holiness Karekin I had begun to implement some of the necessary changes but his relatively short tenure made it impossible to make substantial progress.

47 bishops were eligible candidates for the highest office in the Armenian Church, and in the months preceding the election, there was much discussion about who would be the best candidate. Although many names were suggested and there was substantial discussion in the press, especially in the Diaspora, only Archbishops Nersisian and Bozabalyan accepted final nomination.

As a delegate I was motivated by the duty to select a candidate whose leadership qualities would take the Armenian Church into the 21st century. What made this already formidable task even more difficult, was the fact that there was no formal campaign for office, and without a campaign, it was harder to formulate an opinion. Although a political style campaign would not have been desirable, it would have been preferable for the candidates themselves to present their own opinions and views on a variety of issues. Neither of the two final candidates publicly spoke to the delegates at the Assembly about what their goals would be when elected to this high office. I personally spoke to many delegates who had only a cursory knowledge of the two candidates. Biographies of the two candidates were not even available to the delegates prior to the election. The issue of informing the delegates about candidates prior to election should be remedied at future Assemblies.

There was no consensus candidate among the bishops themselves, who were publicly divided over which candidate to support.

Several bishops had publicly accused the government of Armenia of meddling in the election by supporting one candidate over others (interestingly enough, this issue was not as hotly debated four years earlier during the previous election for Catholicos).

Thus, the election took place in an unusual atmosphere, but always with the thought in mind that the choice was an important one for the Church.

The anticipation of the delegates as the voting began in Holy Etchmiadzin was palpable. As the vote count began, most delegates had paper and pens in hand as they followed the vote count. Some delegates had even brought cell phones into the Cathedral and were employing them as the vote was in process. As the count neared the majority vote, a rise in the level of anticipation could be felt. With the announcement of the 226th vote for Archbishop Nersisian, a flurry of applause rippled through the assembled delegates.

Biography of His Holiness Karekin II

- Karekin Nersisian was born in 1951 in the village of Voskehat, near Etchmiadzin
- He entered the seminary of Etchmiadzin in 1965 and graduated with first-class honors in 1971 and continued his studies in Vienna and Germany, where he graduated from Bonn University.
- In 1970 he was ordained deacon and in 1972 ordained a monk.
- 1980 he joined the Araratian Diocese and in 1983 he was ordained bishop and in 1992 he was elevated to the rank of archbishop.
- In 1998 he was appointed Locum Tenens by the late His Holiness Karekin I
- On October 27, 1999 he was elected as the 132nd Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians

At the conclusion of the election, the Catholicos-elect addressed the delegates with emotion and sincerity in his words. He offered his prayers in acknowledging the difficult role that he would be undertaking, walking in the footsteps of St. Gregory himself. He recognized the two clergy who had had the most impact on him, the late Catholicos Vazken I and the late Catholicos Karekin I. He also spoke about his own family, about his parents, and about his own journey as a young man growing up in a faithful family.

The Catholicos emphasized the need for a united Church, firmly planted in the hearts of the people. The Church has a great responsibility

to the faithful both in Armenia and in the Diaspora.

It was at this moment that the Catholicos, and all of the delegates, learned of the tragic events which had taken place only moments earlier in Yerevan (see story by Michael Krikorian, page 4). News of the assassinations shocked those present and marred the happy occasion of the election of a Catholicos.

But a new Catholicos of All Armenians had been elected and the process which had begun several months earlier had come to its completion. The consecration of the Catholicos was planned to take place on Sunday, Oct. 31, during the Divine Liturgy at Holy Etchmiadzin. Instead, because of the assassination of Prime Minister Vazgen Sarkisian and Parliament Speaker Karen Demirchian, the consecration was postponed until Thursday, Nov. 4. Most of the delegates who had assembled unfortunately missed this important event because of prior travel

arrangements.

Thus I had the unique opportunity to be in Armenia for two significant events, the election of the Catholicos and the tragic events at the Parliament. These two events arguably were the two most important events in the life of the young Republic of Armenia, both in a religious sense and also in the political arena and will provide material for discussion for students at Fresno State for many years.

I will never forget those few days in Armenia which will have a historical meaning that only time and future generations will have a chance to more fully evaluate and reflect upon.

Hye Sharzhoom welcomes your comments.**Please send them to:**

Armenian Studies Program

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Or email the editor: hyesarzhoom@aol.com

Statue, cont. from Page 1

"With luck and determination, we might see results by the end of the spring semester," Gillum said.

Funding for the restoration will come from the Office of Career Services in the form of Scholars Service Grants offered to students with at least a 3.5 grade point average and demonstrated financial need. Additional funding will be provided by the Armenian Studies Program in the form of scholarships.

The statue's internal frame will be replaced to make the towering tribute more structurally sound. Most of the books around the lower section of the statue were made of plywood and have severely deteriorated. Gillum said students will carefully measure and log the necessary information from each book on the statue before reproducing replicas from architectural foam and a durable, weatherproof, cement-like coating that will recreate the visual look of the originals. "We intend to borrow the visual elements of the actual titles of Saroyan's books from original edition dust jackets to embellish the finished pieces," Gillum said.

Gillum said community interest and the capacity to provide an involved professional experience for participating students made him decide to get involved with the restoration. "In the end I hope the pride of accomplishment is shared by the public and that the restored piece of sculpture is placed in a suitable location," Gillum said.

At this point, those involved with the rescue and restoration of the statue are uncertain about where it will end up. "I suspect that the restored statue is going to look really terrific. Professor Gillum has a very healthy and creative approach to its restoration, and all spruced up, many will want to have it," Kouymjian said.

Kouymjian views the statue as a symbol of what was lost by the destruction of the Varaz Modern Art Museum after the artist's death. "What might have been an interesting addition to the city's cultural life was just dismissed as junky and trashy because his wonderful mu-

itals on the walls were faded and peeling away," Kouymjian said. "Any art abandoned would suffer the same fate."

Rescuing the statue has been just a small part of the Armenian Studies Program's involvement with preserving both the art and the memory of Varaz Samuelian. As a personal tribute, Samuelian willed his "house and all the art in it" to the Armenian Studies Program. "He knew that by leaving it to the University in the care of someone who knew his art and taught Armenian art, that it had a better chance of surviving," Kouymjian said.

The bulk of Samuelian's artistic estate now rests in the care of the Armenian Studies Program — including hundreds of sculptures, paintings and watercolors and thousands of lithographs, sketches and drawings that now sit in storage. Funding is needed to hire a professional curator to properly catalogue the collection. Ultimately, Kouymjian would like to see the construction of a building that would house the collection and serve as an Armenian Studies Center, archive and museum. "Who knows, someday we might get someone interested in endowing such a structure," Kouymjian said.

Thanks to the efforts of a small group of community-minded individuals, the "Tribute to Saroyan" statue will survive for others to admire. "The statue has different meanings to many different people, it has artistic value to this area," Welty said. As for local appeal, Gillum said the fact that the statue commemorates one of the most important creative minds that has called Fresno home, seems to have provided the impetus to save what others have referred to as a pile of junk.

"Is there anything like it in Fresno? No. Thirty feet of fun devoted to the memory of someone who loved fun, loved pranks, loved tongue-in-cheek humor. I have said several times that although it may not be classified as great art (how much art today is?), it's wonderful kitsch. And what's wrong with kitsch and fun art?" Kouymjian asked.

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