

Profiles: Ross Bagdasarian

Contributor: Jacklyn Narian



Cartoonist Ross Bagdasarian is famous for his creation of “Alvin and the Chipmunks.” He was born January 27, 1919 in Fresno, California. Coming from the Armenian-American community, his family owned vineyards that were associated with Sierra Wines. He is the cousin of the writer, William Saroyan. He appeared in the original Time of Your Life in 1939; Saroyan’s Pulitzer prize-winning play.

His first musical success was Rosemary Clooney’s “Come On-a My House,” which he wrote with his cousin, William. As “David Seville” (as he sometimes called himself) he had another number one record in his song, “The Witch Doctor.” This was also his first experimentation with the technique of speeding up the playback of an audio track to get the most-distinctive higher pitched squeaky comedy sound. This success led to his recording of “The Christmas Song” with the Chipmunks. A multi-talented performer, Ross also appeared in minor film parts, including Alfred Hitchcock’s

Rear Window, in which a he plays an obsessed piano-playing songwriter. He provided the voice for “David Seville” and all the three chipmunks. Shortly after the Chipmunks initial success, Bagdasarian was approached by CBS-TV’s The Ed Sullivan Show and asked to appear with the Chipmunks (who were puppets).

After Ross’s death in 1972 from a heart attack at the age of only 52, his son, Ross Baghdasarian, Jr., continued to release Chipmunks recordings and has taken over the voices for the Chipmunk characters in subsequent iterations of the cartoon.

Ross also had a daughter, Carol Baghdasarian. He was married to a woman, also a Fresno Armenian, named, Armenonhi, or Armen.
Sources: www.armeniapedia.org, www.toontrack-er.com

Art & Culture

Poem:

April 24th
Armenian Martyr’s Day
Bless our ancestors
a prayer we say.
Another day
for the rest of the world
if they only know
the stories we were told.

Politics to them
but personal to us
Our grandmother’s wounds
in front of our eyes.

Memories fresh
the scars haven’t healed.
We’re told to keep secrets
and put up a shield.
No justice was taken
for this enormous crime
This wasn’t long ago
A horrible, painful time.

Ararat, Lake Van
and every stone
Covered with flesh, blood, and bone.
Death in the air, sun, and sky
Survivors are left alone to cry.
Others were marched to death on sand
forced to leave their homes and land.
Bodies collapsed with screams and tears
Echoed in their history of 3,000 years.

“My God, my God
what have you done?
they butchered my husband, daughter, and son.”
A dying man, almost a corpse
grabs her skirt, and says his last words:
“My lady dear, if you live – be strong, prosper, stay
in bliss,
survive this hell, and remember this:
All will be past, what is now will be what was,
no one will believe you, they will not remember
us.”

Victims of 1915
Names forgotten
Faces not seen
your blood was shed
but you still live on
in the children left after you were gone.
In the veins of our bodies
and the memories of our souls
These are some things
massacre cannot destroy.
We live on
because of you.
We won’t forget
because your blood still runs through.

by Jacklyn Narian

Armenian Classes Offered in Fall 2006

ARMN 101: ELEM ARMENIAN I
8:00AM-9:15AM | TuTh | 16261
9:30AM-10:45AM | TuTh | 16715
ARMN 201: INTER ARMENIAN I
2:00PM-3:15PM | MW | 16872



News In Brief:

Sunday, May 21, 2006

ANCA Telethon: Over \$2.6 million dollars was raised!

Armenian 101

safe	abahov	ապահով
hill	pəloor	բլուր
guest	hooir	հիւր
to return	veratarnal	վերադառնալ
giant	hsga	հսկայ
near	mod	մօտ
room	senyag	սենյակ

Armenian 401

blizzard	tsooinamərrig	ձիւնամորիկ
pyramid	poork	բուրգ
to chase	halladzel	հալածել
pastime	jamants	ժամանց
to rebel	absdampeel	ապստամբիլ
crowd	ampokh	ամբոխ
honor	badeev	պատիւ

Mesrobian spelling, Western Armenian pronunciation

Editor: Karmen Garabekyan
Coordinator: Terenig Topjian
Contact info: PublicRelations@csunasa.org

In Loving Memory of
Edwin Isagholian
(1985-2006)

www.wemissdwin.com



May 22-26
Spring 2006, Vol. 14

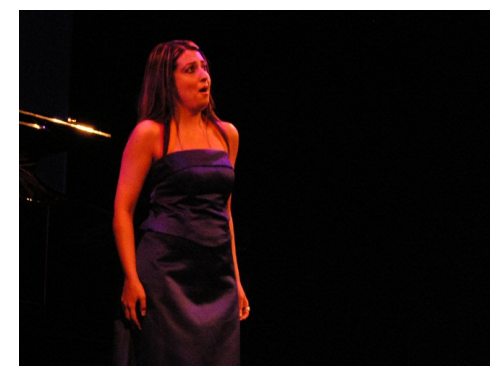
www.csunasa.org

California State University, Northridge
Armenian Student Association

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What's Up?

ՇԱԲԱՅԱԿԱՆ ԼՐԱՏՈՒՄ - WEEKLY NEWSLETTER



MOSAIC Pictures from the 8th Annual
Mosaic of Armenian Arts
Friday, May 19, 2006

Microsoft Opens Office in Armenia

The world’s leading computer software manufacturer, Microsoft, opened an official representation to Armenia on Tuesday, demonstrating its interest in the country’s growing information technology (IT) sector. Vahe Torossian, Microsoft’s vice-president for Central and Eastern Europe, said the company is

keen on capitalizing on the “amazing” level of education and skills of local computer specialists. “One thing which amazed me when I started my role here is the amazing quality of high technical, engineering, mathematics, physics, and other skills that we have in the region and especially in Armenia,” Torossian told a news conference in Yerevan. “We are here to demonstrate and try to develop a very wealthy and healthy IT system,” he said. Microsoft’s decision to open an office in Yerevan was welcomed by Prime Minister Andranik Markarian who met Torossian and other top company executives earlier in the day. Markarian, according to his press service, proposed that the Armenian government and Microsoft form a “joint working group” that would deal with concrete ways in which the US giant could contribute to

further growth of Armenia’s IT industry. Speaking to reporters, the French executive of Armenian descent said Microsoft will boost the sector by commissioning computer programs from local software developers. He said it has already placed orders with five Armenian firms. “It’s thoroughly clear that from every dollar that Microsoft will invest in Armenia, every single partner will generate around seven or eight dollars,” Torossian said, adding that the company intends to create a “very strong” network of such partners. Armenia’s IT industry employs thousands of well-paid specialists and is seen as the most advanced in the region, having expanded substantially over the past decade. The mainly American foreign companies involved in software development and other IT-related activities have been the main driving

force behind the growth. IT experts warn, however, that the sector's further expansion could stall unless the Armenian government embarks on a sweeping overhaul of its system of higher education. They say the number and especially the professional level of young people graduating from the IT programs of local universities still leaves much to be desired.

Armenian officials hope that Microsoft's plans to release Armenian-language versions of its world-famous products will spur greater computer use in the country. According to Torossian, the company will complete the ongoing translation of its Windows XP operating system into Armenian "before the end of the summer." The Armenian versions of other, more advanced systems will be available next year, he added.

Torossian admitted that Microsoft sales in Armenia and virtually all other parts of the former Soviet Union are seriously hampered by poor protection of copyrights. He estimated that as much as 90 percent of software sold in Armenia is pirated.

"We have very good laws," said Grigor Barseghian, the newly appointed head of Microsoft's Yerevan office. "They simply need to be enforced. That is the main obstacle to our activities at the moment."

A government statement said the problem was also on the agenda of Markarian's meeting with the visiting Microsoft executives, but gave no details.

The New York Times, Editorial, May 16, 2006

Turkey, Armenia and Denial

Turkey's self-destructive obsession with denying the Armenian genocide seems to have no limits. The Turks pulled out of a NATO exercise this week because the Canadian prime minister used the term "genocide" in reference to the mass killings of Armenians in Turkey during and after World War I. Before that, the Turkish ambassador to France was temporarily recalled to protest a French bill that would make it illegal to deny that the Armenian genocide occurred. And before that, a leading Turkish novelist, Orhan Pamuk, was charged with "insulting Turkish identity" for referring to the genocide (the charges were dropped after an international outcry).

Turkey's stance is hard to fathom. Each time the Turks lash out, new questions arise about Turkey's claim to a place in the European Union, and the Armenian diaspora becomes even more adamant in demanding a public reckoning over what happened.

Granted, genocide is a difficult crime for any nation to acknowledge. But it is absurd to treat any reference to the issue within Turkey as a crime and to scream "lie!" every time someone mentions genocide. By the same token, we do not see the point of the French law to ban genocide denial. Historical truths must be established through dispassionate research and debate, not legislation, even if some of those who question the evidence do so for insidious motives.

But the Turkish government considers even discussion of the issue to be a grave national insult, and reacts to it with hysteria. Five journalists who criticized a court's decision to shut down an Istanbul conference on the massacre of Armenians were

arrested for insulting the courts. Charges against four were subsequently dropped, but a fifth remains on trial.

The preponderance of serious scholarship outside Turkey accepts that more than a million Armenians perished between 1914 and 1923 in a regime-sponsored campaign. Turkey's continued refusal to countenance even a discussion of the issue stands as a major obstacle to restoring relations with neighboring Armenia and to claiming Turkey's rightful place in Europe and the West. It is time for the Turks to realize that the greater danger to them is denying history.

Armenia Finishes Eight At Eurovision Song Contest

Yerevan, May 22, Armenpress: Finland's rock band Lordi has won the 2006 Eurovision song contest with their heavy metal rendition Hard Rock Hallelujah. It is the first time Finland has won the contest in 40 years of trying. The country had never been placed higher than sixth in the competition before.

The Scandinavian masked quintet bagged 292 points from telephone voters in 38 countries. Second came Russian heartthrob Dima Bilan, who received 248 points, followed by Bosnia-Herzegovina group Mata Hari with 229 points.

First-timer Armenia with the song called Without your Love finished eighth with 129 points. Armenia and Russia exchanged maximum score of 12 points. Armenia was also generously supported by fans from Belgium, Netherlands, Greece, Belarus, Ukraine, Poland, Germany, Spain and Turkey that gave a surprise 10 scores.

The Eurovision vote resembled a 'regional co-operation' rather displaying the solidarity among neighboring countries which voted for one another. For instance, the Balkan states, Scandinavia, Northern Europe, the Baltic States and the three Slavonic states 'exchanged' the highest points.

Source: ArmeniaDiaspora.com

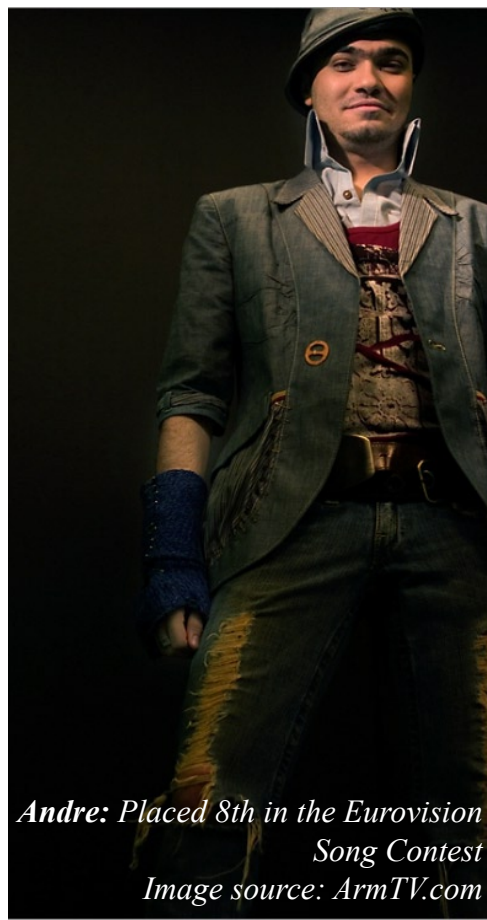
Uproar in French Parliament as Armenian Genocide Vote Is Shelved

PARIS (AFP/ANCA)--Angry scenes broke out in the French National Assembly on Thursday after the National Assembly's President Jean-Louis Debré, under pressure from the French Government, called off a vote on a bill that would make it a punishable offense to deny the Armenian genocide.

Despite the fact that it was listed as only the second item on the Parliamentary agenda, President Debré effectively blocked the bill's consideration by artificially extending the first agenda item by adding speakers, extending time limits, and other dilatory tactics.

These tactics were confronted by Socialist, Communist, and Centrist groups. Shouts filled the assembly as the bill's supporters accused members of the ruling Union for a Popular Movement (UMP) of stalling debate.

These protests, notably that of the President of



*Andre: Placed 8th in the Eurovision Song Contest
Image source: ArmTV.com*

the Socialist group, Jean-Marc Ayrault, led to Debré finally consenting to examine the anti-denial measure during the remaining thirty minutes left in the session. The time allocated for the bill's discussion ran out before a vote could take place.

Discussion of the text--which has sparked a diplomatic dispute between France and Turkey--will now be pushed back to October at the earliest, under the parliamentary calendar.

Dozens of lawmakers angrily yelling, "Vote! Vote!" had to be evacuated from the building after the leader of the assembly declared the session closed.

Earlier Foreign Minister Philippe Douste-Blazy came out openly against the bill, which follows a 2001 French law officially recognizing the Turkish massacres of Armenians at the end of World War I as genocide.

"If adopted, this text would be seen as an unfriendly gesture by the great majority of the Turkish people," he told lawmakers, warning its adoption would have "serious political consequences and weaken our position not only in Turkey but across the entire region."

"Turkey is a leading economic and trade partner... we cannot accept this bill," Douste-Blazy said.

Almost all the other speakers argued in favor of sanctioning Armenian genocide denial. Sources within Parliament reported that a broad majority of members, including those in the conservative majority, were prepared to vote for the resolution.

The bill would make punishable by up to five years in prison and a fine of 45,000 Euros the crime of denying that Turkish troops committed genocide against the Armenians.

The same punishment is on the statute books for

people who deny that the Jewish Holocaust took place.

Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan--backed by Turkish business leaders and unions--appealed this month to France to block the contentious new bill, warning of the threat to bilateral relations.

Ankara briefly recalled its ambassador from Paris for consultations this month, amid rising tensions over the bill.

Former Socialist minister Jack Lang said it would "undermine the efforts of those in Turkey who are trying to bring Ankara to recognize its history," and warned against a trend towards "criminalizing public expression."

In light of these developments, President of the European Armenian Federation Hilda Tchoboian thanked the deputies who supported passage of the bill and condemned the French Government for preventing passage of the bill.

"We thank the deputies who, by their commitment to the struggle for justice and dignity, preserved the honor and prestige of France as a nation committed to these high ideals. We are however scandalized by the shameful schemes employed by the French government to hamper the free expression of members of the National Assembly on this core issue of concern to the conscience of all people," said Tchoboian.

"Both the government and the media should keep in mind the lesson of the referendum on the European Constitution--namely that in a leading democratic nation, such as France, the will of the people cannot be ignored, deterred, or obstructed by the Government. Sooner or later, the imposition of penalties for Armenian genocide denial will be adopted because, in their wisdom, the French people and their elected representatives understand that the true basis for peace and progress are justice and the dignity," concluded Tchoboian.

Source: Asbarez.com, May 18, 2006

Living with Big Brother: Armenia-Russia relations are based on language, culture and, lately, economics

*By Tony Halpin and John Hughes
ArmeniaNow editors*

Marina Simonian's daughter will start school next fall in Yerevan, but she has not yet enrolled her anywhere. There is no shortage of schools; the Armenian capital has 209. But only one of those schools, for children of Russian military and diplomats in Armenia, has a Russian-based curriculum.

When Simonian, who is now 33, was a schoolgirl, up to 40 percent of Armenia's schools were Russian. But when Armenia gained its independence in 1991, a movement started to make the mother tongue the primary language and Russian-language schools disappeared, disappointing citizens such as Simonian.

"I want my daughter to know Russian well because I know that she will learn Armenian in any case," Simonian says. "Russia will always be our friend . . ."

These days the language of friendship is commerce. In the first 10 months of last year Armenia's import-export trade with Russia rose to \$274.5 million. And while Russia represents only about 13 percent of the 11-country Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) trade, the total exchange was a 50 percent increase on the part of

the Russians.

Overall during the same time period, trade with European Member states was up by 55.5 percent, including an 86 percent increase between Germany and Armenia. Significant as it is, the massive increase on the Germans' part -- \$227.4 million -- nonetheless falls short of Russian trade.

Once Big Brother, Russia's Armenian ties now represent big finance opportunities that are largely responsible for the steady growth of the little republic's economy. And, as other post-Soviet states are showing Western inclinations, Armenia has maintained fidelity to Russia, led by the Armenian Diaspora -- estimated to be up to 1.5 million.

It is common to hear Russian spoken on the streets of Yerevan, but the same cannot be said for Armenia's northern neighbor Georgia where, at least in the capital Tbilisi, there is a chauvinistic attitude towards Russian. In Armenia, Russian is spoken and welcomed in cafes, beauty salons, restaurants, and casinos, which usually have signs in three languages: Armenian, Russian and English.

Most of the foodstuffs imported to Armenia are from Russia such as oil, flour, cereals, tea and beverages. Few of these products contain information in Armenian for consumers -- a problem acknowledged by officials for many years, but one that is so far unresolved.

Armenia's popular culture is largely under Russian influence (though it is also influenced by Western trends), not least because several generations in the country grew up on Russian culture. Modern youth in Yerevan adopt the latest fashion and pop music fads from Moscow, and "Moscow style" means in Armenia to be chic, open-minded and with a lifestyle dictated by the speed and hustle of the Russian capital.

Some in Armenia believe that such pro-Russian sentiments simply reflect the realities of many decades of Armenian-Russian relations. Others say that 70 years of Soviet rule transformed relations between Armenia and Russia to the level of servant and master, disfiguring the self-consciousness of Armenians. A third strand of opinion, drawing on historical facts, argues that without Russia's protection, Armenia as a state would not exist today.

Most recently, though, analysts in Yerevan also argue that Russia has hijacked Armenia through its program of "equities for debt", which has led to Russian ownership of 70 percent of Armenia's energy supplies, and 25 year management rights to the Iran-Armenia gas pipeline. There is considerable concern that, by paying off its debts through resources, Armenia becomes too dependent on Russia. While arguments rage over the nature of the relationship, one fact is clear -- Russia continues to be the home of Armenia's largest Diaspora. According to a study on labor migration by the Yerevan office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), most Armenian migrants (43 percent) prefer to look for work in Moscow. The survey found that, during the last three years, 90 percent of labor migrants left for CIS countries, overwhelmingly to Russia.

Rooted relations

Khachatur Abovyan, consider by many the founder of contemporary Armenian literature, wrote in his novel "Wounds of Armenia":

"Blessed is the day when Russians stepped onto Armenian land."

Abovyan wrote those lines 165 years ago in the firm belief that the revival of Armenia was possible only as a result of friendship between Russians and Armenians.

New challenges and 21st century realities make the words appear outdated, or at least raise another question: Does Armenia want to count on Russia in the future as well? The answer, as revealed in the following articles, surely seems in the affirmative. More notably, Russia has not simply taken Armenia to its bosom, but, in matters of international business, sees self-serving opportunities there.

And, less the view of Russia's relations be skewed in fa-

vor of Armenia, none should forget that the super power is also engaged with Armenia's arch enemy, Azerbaijan. Russia's transnational energy companies such as Lukoil and GazProm are in fact lobbyists in Azerbaijan, a country which has traditionally had an influence on the Russian oil sector. Russia also relies on the Azeris for security information; it has a 10 year agreement with Baku, until 2012, to make use of the Gabalin radar installation in Azerbaijan, for which it pays \$7 million per year. From Gabalin, Russia can exercise control over aircraft and missiles for a distance of up to 6,000 kilometers south of the station.

Russia's influence may be weakening in parts of the Caucasus, but the region remains of vital strategic importance to it. Russian strategists used to say that if they lost the so-called TransCaucasia, they would sooner or later lose control over Northern Caucasia, which in turn would lead to the collapse of the country.

Friendship and foreign policy

The need by Russia to keep strong ties throughout the region sometimes puts Moscow at odds with Yerevan. Russia sometimes appears to ignore Armenian interests in projects of potentially vital importance, such as the construction of a "North-South" railroad connecting Russia with Iran through Azerbaijan.

Experts fear that the railway will deepen even further Armenia's economic isolation. Armenia's railway infrastructure can connect to that of any other country in the region -- such as the Kars-Gyumri-Tbilisi line and the Yerevan-Nakichevan-Julfa route, but none of them operates now because of the continued blockades by Turkey and Azerbaijan.

"Russia takes Armenia's cooperation with NATO very personally, but what does it offer in return? If Armenia was given a chance to be part of this project, which connects Asia with Russia and gives the further prospect of links into Europe, that would increase Armenia's role in the whole region as well as expanding trade with Russia," says Stepan Grigorian, political expert of "Armat," a center for democracy and civil society development.

Vahagn Aglian, research officer at Armenia's Institute of History and political expert for the "Noravank" foundation, sees recent developments in Armenia-Russia relations as evidence of a serious transformation in Moscow's foreign policy.

"In my opinion, the modus operandi of President Putin's administration is to regard the South Caucasus as a single region, which is more typical of US strategy. The policy of Yeltsin's Russia was based on personal political preferences, which has given way to a more rational approach towards post-Soviet countries. Armenia is not an exception in that."

But whether singled out for unique investment, or the benefactor of Russia's broader regional policy, the Russia-Armenia link -- primarily grounded as a Moscow-Yerevan connection -- appears as surely part of Armenia's hopeful future as of its burdened past.

Organizations such as Ara Abrahamian's Union of Armenians in Russia underscore the tightening ties and expanding influence of Armenians there. Meanwhile, multi-million dollar deals between the two nations attract "Fortune 500" type attention.

But the greater part of the connection is found in a growing number of previously unheralded Armenians finding places of prominence in the business and cultural life of Russia. It is seen, too, in the growth of small and medium-sized businesses that have Moscow-Yerevan ties, as Diaspora and homeland both are emerging from conditions that previously restrained them.

This is the Moscow-Yerevan connection we highlight within this issue.

Information for this article was reported by Julia Hakobyan.

Source: ArmeniaNow.com

This week at ArmeniaNow.com: The Moscow Connection. More in depth articles about Russian Armenian relations.