

ARMENIAN VOICE

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CAIA NEWS

OFFICIAL OPENING OF CAIA'S NEWLEY EXTENDED AND REFURBISHED HAYASHEN ARMENIAN COMMUNITY CENTRE



After five years and a great deal of blood, sweat and tears, the refurbished and extended ground floor of Hayashen Center was finally formally opened on 8th May 2005. Almost 150 CAIA member and guests (some sitting some standing) witnessed a moving ceremony led by CAIA chair, Mr. Vahe Paklayan, His Grace Bishop Nathan Hovanessian, Primate of British Armenians, the Worshipful

Mayor of LB of Ealing, Cllr Potts and Mrs. Potts, His Excellency the Ambassador of the Republic of Armenia Dr. Vahé Gabrielian,

representatives of various Armenian organizations such as the *Armenian Church & Community Council (ACCC)* and *Nor Seround Association*.

First to speak and welcome everyone was Vahe Paklayan, who on behalf of the CAIA Board of Directors who were elected in October 2004 expressed the heartfelt feelings of everyone in the Monte Melkonian Hall by thanking everyone who had contributed to the project, especially the major funder the *Big Lottery* and the significant contributions of the *Association of London Government, Renewal SRB6 Project, St Sarkis Trust*, and the generous help of individual CAIA Members.



In appreciation and recognition of all of those who contributed financially to this outstanding project for the benefit of the Armenian community a Commemorative plaque was shown, which will be permanently displayed with pride in the Centre. Mr. Paklayan then invited the Worshipful Mayor of the Borough of Ealing to say a few words before moving they proceed to cut the

ribbon to enthusiastic applause. Further to this, Mr. Zorik Gasparian, Vice chair of the ACCC spoke and expressed the good wishes of the ACCC who had assisted the CAIA at it time of need by organising the October AGM independently and fairly thus enabling the CAIA to put move forward from the unnecessary and wasteful two-year long governance crisis.

Following this, Mr. Misak Ohanian was invited as say a few words about the building project that he, along with Mr Ovaness Koundarjian and Architect Mr Andranik Johaness, worked on since 2000. Mr. Ohanian revealed the difficulties in gaining planning permission, the tendering process, fundraising and the unforeseen costs incurred due the discovery of an old Well in the courtyard just as the building work started. This had resulted in the original project cost increasing from an estimated £180,000 to over £205,000.

Next to speak was His Excellency the Ambassador of the Republic of Armenia Mr Vahé Gabrielyan. Below is the transcript of his important and supportive speech. The final speaker was His Grace Right Reverend Bishop Nathan Hovhanessian Primate of the Armenian Church of Great Britain who blessed both Hayashen and the charitable work of the CAIA.



The afternoon continued with the wine flowing, the large crowd socialising and eating the delicious buffet lunch prepared by the *Friends of Hayashen Ladies Committee* who had decorated the Centre with tricolour balloons representing the Red, blue and orange coloured Armenian flag. The celebration continued with the Bishop cutting the specially ordered cream cake decorated with the words '*congratulation Hayashen*'. The delicious cake soon disappeared and was followed by

several impromptu speeches and cultural program especially as 8th May marked Mothers Day. One of CAIA's most respected senior members, Mrs Mahdesian recited a special poem she first wrote when the CAIA purchased the *Hayashen Centre* 12 years ago. The sisters Mrs Parkouhi Minassian and Mrs Shoghik Minasian followed her, both of whom recited poetry exalting mothers. A single rose was distributed to every woman in the hall by the CAIA in appreciation and recognition of the contribution of women and in particular Armenian mothers who are the backbone the Armenian family and the Community.

By late afternoon, the large crowd started drifting home, happy to know that that CAIA and *Hayashen* are once again in safe hands and the administration is led by a dedicated group of Directors, volunteers and staff whose only interest is in safeguarding this unique organisation and its valuable service for the most disadvantaged members of the Armenian community in London and beyond.

EASTER FAMILY CELEBRATION



Over 100 CAIA members, their friends and relatives thoroughly enjoyed an Easter Sunday Family Celebration on Sunday 27th March from 2pm onwards. The celebration was the first public event organised by CAIA's new Board of Directors with the help and support of several volunteers who publicised the event, catered and sold traditional Armenians dishes and pastries as well as raffle tickets which raised a

total of £1000 towards the *Hayashen Building Fund*. The photograph depicts Mrs Rita Koundarjian and popular Armenian singer Mr Haro Pourian auctioning some of the cakes.

CAIA QUIZ NIGHT



Over 70 adults, young people and children enjoyed a family evening of fun and games at a Quiz night on Saturday 4th June organised which raised over £700 for the CAIA. The event was organised largely thanks to the efforts of several volunteers, in particular Mrs. Rita Koundarjian who prepared the questions, catered the dinner, and directed the evening's proceedings.

The event was also filmed for *Renewal SRB Project* who were producing a film to promote the positive impact it's funding has made to the various organisations it has supported.

ARMENIAN YOUTH NETWORK - A NEW WEBSITE & YOUTH CLUB FOR YOUNG ARMENIANS



On Friday 1st April 2005, a new website and Youth club was launched in *Hayashen*. Since that day the *Armenian Youth Network* has been working in partnership with the *Centre For Armenian Information & Advice (CAIA)* to regenerate the Friday Evening Youth Club for young Armenians.

Originally, the *Armenian Youth Network* started as an idea by a group of young Armenians to develop an interactive website for young Armenians. It was part of the *Young Community Champions Project* funded by the *Scarman Trust*. The original members and Editorial Team of the *Armenian Youth Network* website were Andranik Ohanian, Andranik Balasian, Sos Grigorian, Oshin Shahian and Sevag Ouzounian, and collectively they have a lot of experience in writing and website designing.

The purpose of www.armenianyouth.net was to improve communication between young Armenians. A forum for young Armenians to exchange views, news and to support each other. A website which reflected the vibrancy and ever-changing activities and interests of young Armenians. A website as a unifying force to enable dispersed young people of the same age group and ethnic background to connect with each other. Another aim of the *Armenian Youth Network* was to link all dispersed websites together that are operated by some Armenian organisations and individuals, which are little known or visited to give them greater profile. The www.armenianyouth.net website has user-friendly interface that allows all Internet users to easily register as members and use other services on the website online.

In August 2004, the *Armenian Youth Network* also became formally constituted as an association and gained its first grant from the *Ealing Community Network*. Any young Armenian is welcome to the Friday evening Youth club where your ideas and involvement is welcome.

A couple of the most successful events held so far have been:

- A talk by Historian Greg Topallian about Britain and the Armenian Question. The talk, held on 15th April, was organised to coincide with the 90th Anniversary of the Armenian Genocide. The whole text of the talk can be read by visiting www.armenianyouth.net.
- An interactive talk and show for all ages by Ken Maynard better known as the *Bug Man*. There were snakes, lizards, and giant spiders for those present to touch, stroke, and make friends with.

ARMENIAN SENIOR CITIZENS CLUB ACTIVITIES

HAYASHEN ARMENIAN SENIOR CITIZENS CLUB
LUNCHEON CLUB
Every Monday & Friday from 1.00 - 4.00 p.m.



of the Armenian Genocide.



On Friday 4th February, Rev. Vrej N. was guest of honour as over 40 Arm Senior Citizens celebrated St. Vartar



A group of Armenian senior citizens tail-lift of the CAIA mini-bus repaired the generosity of CAIA members.

"20 HUNCHAKIAN MARTYRS" COMMEMORATIVE EVENT



On the 90th Anniversary of the Arm Genocide, a commemorative event t in Hayashen dedicated to the "20 H Martyrs". The event, held on 25th M included key-note speeches by Mr M Atamian and Mr Assadour Guzelian.

LETTER TO CAIA MEMBERS AND THE ARMENIAN COMMUNITY

Dear Member,

In accordance to our commitment to operate in a transparent and responsible manner, your Board wishes to inform you that we are working extremely hard to stabilise the administration, services and finances of the CAIA with the support of many members, volunteers and various funding bodies.

Since 9th October 2004 we have:

- Published and distributed 3 Open Letters to 600 members.
- Appointed and worked closely with CAIA's new Legal Advisers, Prince Evans.
- Responded to outstanding 2003 and 2004 Charity Commission annual returns.
- Held 13 Board meetings and many others between the Chair, Treasurer and Secretary.
- Undertook a financial review and implemented the recommendations.
- Successfully re-structured the staff needs of the CAIA in order to ensure it as a going concern and safeguard it from potential insolvency.
- Recruited many volunteers to help and operate various CAIA services, including the Youth Club, even though funding for this 3-year project ended on 31st March 2005.
- Maintained the CAIA's website.
- Increased the number of elderly people attending the Lunch Club.
- Fixed the Mini-bus tail lift so as to help frail members access the Elderly Lunch club.
- Dealt with many outstanding maintenances and Health & Safety issues of the Hayashen Centre.
- Successfully housed 3 single people at York Road, Acton where we have referral rights with Acton Housing Association.
- Effectively administrated CAIA's membership by rebuilding the database and sending regular reminders to all members without prejudice.
- Negotiated several outstanding debts, including £30,000 owed for the building work and cancelled several unsustainable contracts inherited from the previous Committee.
- Undertook a risk assessment of the financial practices of previous Board and started stocktaking of CAIA's damaged equipment, books, and dealing with their recovery.
- Are dealing with the transfer of Hayashen Deed to the incorporated CAIA Charity Company.
- Dealing with the 80-year charge (conditions) imposed by Lottery Fund as a direct result of the governance crisis and mismanagement of this project after the dismissal of Mr. Misak Ohanian and the former chair Mr. Ovannes Koundarjian.
- Held a successful Book Launch event in March at Hayashen.
- Organised a major Easter Party attended by over 100 people, which raised £1,000 toward saving Hayashen.
- Launched an appeal to members to help pay outstanding debts to refurbishment work. We are pleased to report that so far 50 members have donated almost £3,000.
- Met and negotiated with all of CAIA's funders with regard to outstanding grants. This resulted in successfully claiming all grants for 2004/5, apart from the "Supporting People" contract for which staff had not provided reports to Ealing Council for over 18 months; which our

intervention was unfortunately too late to save. Despite this, the CAIA will incur a deficit of over £75,000 due to lack of fundraising and unbridled excessive expenditure incurred by the previous Board.

- Implemented a new objective staff recruitment process with the help of totally independent and experienced individuals (unknown to us) from the voluntary and statutory sectors and in conformance with legal advice. (See Press Release attached) We have carried out all the above despite the obstacles and diversions from a handful of disgruntled individuals who have serious conflicts of interests with the CAIA. They seek to undermine our effort to rebuild the CAIA and the trust we have gained from our funders, members and the wider community by spreading hateful, defamatory, not to mention false, remarks geared at CAIA and other individuals.

In order to demonstrate transparency and eliminate any rumours within the community and beyond, we welcome any CAIA member, funder or independent organisation, including the Charity Commission (by prior arrangement) to go through all the paperwork, finances, minutes and the general state of affairs within the last two years.

We also welcome the opportunity to meet with any CAIA members or any other organisation (Armenian or otherwise) to show and explain to them face to face the enormity of the financial situation we inherited from the previous Board.

Your Board wholeheartedly welcomes and will listen to any constructive criticism about the CAIA but will not tolerate any defamatory remarks from any one person or a group of people against the CAIA, its directors, staff or members. This includes against Mr. & Mrs. Ohanian who have committed no crime as all allegations of dishonesty against them have been dismissed by the Metropolitan Police following a thorough investigation in 2003. (See attached notice, which clearly exonerates them) Your Board is ready to exercise the full range of the governance authority at its disposal to safeguard the integrity, reputation and independence of the CAIA without prejudice or favours to anyone. If any individual or group of people are keen to serve the Armenian community they are welcome and can do so without trying to damage others, unless of course their aim and objectives are precisely to do this. However, everyone should know that it is always more difficult to build than to destroy which is what your Board is trying to do with your help and support.

Finally and not least, we appeal to all CAIA members once again to move forward as neither the CAIA nor the Armenian Community can afford to continue arguing about the past, especially at a time when Armenians throughout the world seek justice and are marking the 90th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide. Let us put our differences aside and work for the common good of our people to build a community, which we can all be proud of. The accusation and counter accusations of the past two years serve no one apart from those who wish to see the Armenian people divided.

With this in mind, we wish to thank all those who have worked very hard side by side with us since the October 2004 AGM. We appreciate the dedication and support we have received from the many volunteers, directors/trustees, friends and colleagues (be they from the past or the present) for the greater good of the CAIA and our community. A very big thank you to each and every person who responded so generously to the appeal for charitable donations we made in our last letter to members.

Your contributions have helped the CAIA meet some of its debts, but we still require much more to be able to pay off the debt we owe for the building extension. As promised, a list of those who have donated since the appeal will be displayed at the official launch of refurbished Hayashen on 8th May 2005 in the presence of many dignitaries and funders. We hope to be sending out the invitations soon to everyone who is supporting the effort to save Hayashen, rebuilt the CAIA and the vital services that the most disadvantaged within our community rely on.

Yours Sincerely - Vahe Paklayan
Chair for and on behalf of the CAIA Board of Directors
 15/4/2005

HAYASHEN DONORS LIST

The following people kindly supported the refurbishment and expansion of the Monte Melkonian Hall in Hayashen. Their generosity was formally acknowledged at a ceremony held on 8th, May 2005 in the presence of the Worshipful Mayor of LB of Ealing and other dignitaries from the UK Armenian Community.

Mr M Adami
 Mr & Mrs H Aghabekian
 Mrs M Amirian
 Mr R Anooshian
 Mrs M Andreassian
 Mrs S Arzoomanian
 Mrs M Aslanian
 Mr M Avedian
 Mr M Balakjian
 Mr A Balasian
 Mr & Mrs H Bajakian
 Mrs A Barseghian
 Mr M N Buckley
 Mr R Chobanian
 Mr J Der Parthog
 Miss A Fermanian
 Miss K Gasperian
 Mr & Mrs G Geokdjian
 Mr & Mrs D Ghazumyan
 Mrs K Gharapetian
 Mr B Gharapetian
 Mr S Gharapetian
 Mr & Mrs Z Gholian
 Mr & Mrs S Grigorian
 Mr & Mrs A Grigorian
 Mr V Gulbekian
 Mr K Harutunyan
 Mrs A V Hogg
 Mr & Mrs N Kanavous
 Mr & Mrs A Kayzakian
 Mr & Mrs O Koundarjian
 Mrs M F Krikorian
 Mrs A Kunter
 Mrs A Mahdessian
 Mr Z Mankassarian
 Ms P Morris

Mr & Mrs M Nadjarian
Mrs L Nazikian
Mrs A Ohanian
Mr & Mrs M Ohanian
Mrs S Ohanian
Mr & Mrs V Paklayan
Miss A Sarkis
Mr R Shaljean
Mr & Mrs S Shamlan
Shahiean Family
Mrs M Shekerdemian
Mr & Mrs D Stephan
Mr G G Stephens
Mrs A Terzian
Mrs S Tokatlian
Mrs S Vartanian
Mr A Viravorian
Mr S Yaper
Mrs A Zakarian

The CAIA members, Board of Directors and all those who use Hayashen, gratefully acknowledge the generous support of the following organisations in the realisations of this project.

The Big Lottery
The Association of London Government
St. Sarkis Trust
Renewal SRB 6 Project

NEW APPOINTMENTS AT CAIA

The Centre for Armenian Information & Advice (CAIA) appoints Misak Ohanian as Chief Executive Officer and Rudolf Marku as Advice & Information Officer.

The CAIA Board of Directors wishes to announce that further to an open and transparent public recruitment process, Misak Ohanian has been appointed as CAIA's first CEO and Rudolf Marku as CAIA's Advice & Information Officer.

Misak Ohanian who was CAIA's founding member and held the post of General Secretary between 1989 and 2003 has intimate knowledge of the organisation, fundraising, the voluntary and statutory sector and has worked for Ealing Refugee Forum and CIP, a charitable organisation linked with Hounslow Council. In addition Misak Ohanian has in the past year worked as an independent grants assessor for the BBC Children In Need and is a former Board member of Renewal SRB 6 Project.

Rudolf Marku, has been working for the Refugee Council since 1997, where he has gained extensive experience in providing immigration advice to people seeking asylum, helping find accommodation and obtaining welfare benefits. Rudolf has a Masters Degree in Organisational Development and knows various languages. He has also helped provide independent help and advice to various charity organisations in the past. To ensure total objectivity in the process, the directors appointed a 3-member recruitment panel composed of two external independent assessors, who along with the CAIA chair, Mr Vahe Paklayan were

delegated full responsibility of interviewing candidates and making the appointment decision. The two independent panel members were professionals from the voluntary and statutory sector, Mr. Zacharias Stavrinou, Grant Officer of Harrow Council and Mr. Alex Da Costa, Chair of the Angolan Civic Communities Alliance (& chair of Harrow Refugee Forum).

According to the unanimous decision of the recruitment panel both candidates fully met the job specifications and requirements of the posts which were widely advertised in line with CAIA's Equal Opportunities Policy, including in the Guardian Newspaper, on CAIA's website, circulated by e-mail to several hundred organisations, individuals and mailed to CAIA members.

"We have found two first class people who can rebuild the delivery of CAIA's much needed services for Armenian refugees, older people, disabled and others. Both individuals bring with them a wealth of experience and all the skills and knowledge necessary to continue to develop CAIA's core services in a culturally sensitive manner," said Vahe Paklayan. "Over the years Misak has shown his capability in leading the CAIA and other organisations professionally through innovation, dedication and great commitment and Rudolf has impressed the panel with his vast experience, enthusiasm and knowledge of supporting refugees. The recruitment panel firmly believes that Misak and Rudolf can make a vital contribution to the work of the CAIA in all the duties that their jobs entail and they will firmly re-establish CAIA's significant and positive impact to the welfare and wellbeing of those most needy within our community."

Both Misak Ohanian and Rudolf Marku will officially be working for CAIA from May 2005.

GOODBYE MISAK - WELCOME BACK MISAK

Former CAIA General Secretary Misak Ohanian has returned to run the troubled CAIA, over two years after a power struggle sparked his departure.

Misak spent his time away from the CAIA working as coordinator of Ealing Refugee Forum and as Community Development Officer on the Westmacott Estate in Feltham where the many people he worked with were sorry to see him leave. (See Below)

His new task at the CAIA is to save the organisation from the almost insolvent state the previous appointed trustees left behind when a new Board was elected on 9th October 2004. The majority of CAIA members and service users have welcomed Misak back. (See some of the e-mails we have received following his appointment) We make no apologies to welcome back Misak Ohanian (the achiever) to the CAIA in order to assist the organisation to regain its former stability and direction. Below are some genuine e-mail from those he has been working with in Feltham, Hounslow in the past 7 months and from CAIA members on the news of his appointment at CAIA Chief Executive.

GOODBYE MISAK

Dear Colleague

I am very sorry to have to tell you that Misak Ohanian will be leaving CIP (and the Westmacott Project)

Misak has made a great contribution in the 7 months that he has been with us, particularly in helping set up and in supporting the Westmacott Residents Association. This alone has been a major achievement for WAP, but he has also carried forward a number of other initiatives, particularly in establishing links with other local voluntary sector organisations, RSLs and statutory bodies and in promoting the development of the Southville Centre. His experience has been invaluable. Misak will be missed, and I'm sure you will want to join with me in thanking him for the contribution he has made to WAP, and in wishing him well in his new job as CEO at the Centre for Armenian Information and Advice.

Regards, Andrew Life - WAP Coordinator

Misak,

Congratulations on the new appointment and I wish you every success in the future. I would like to thank you for the introduction to your work on the Westmacott, this has been extremely helpful to me in getting to know the area and many of the issues affecting the residents. I think you have done a fantastic job supporting the development of the residents association and building community spirit on the estate and I am sure they will all be sorry to see you leave.

Regards, Jan - Green Corridor

Hello Misak

I am very sorry you are going but obviously wish you the very best in your new position. I know from what you have told us the Armenian community is very important to you. Still we will miss you, as you have become a friend rather than just a colleague to us and any WRA will seem very strange without your presence. It is hard to imagine anyone who will be as hard working, professional, good natured (and so good at quietly manipulating us in the right direction) taking your place. On a personal note I have learned a myriad of things from watching the way you have dealt with fundraising, publicity etc: and thank you sincerely for it. I hope we can arrange to meet up with you before you go Misak?

Regards

Noveen - Chair of Westmacott Residents Association

Hi Misak!

What a surprise!!! My mouth is still wide open!

I suppose it must be a good move for you (CEO?!!), well, that sounds very impressive!) so I am happy for you, but I am very sorry that you are leaving us. It has been very intense, very interesting and now we are just beginning to see the fruits of all our hard work. But don't worry, we won't let anybody else take the credit for all your help and effort (that is, of course, if there will be a replacement...).

Anyway, I hope we can meet sometime and say goodbye face to face (these things shouldn't be done by e-mail). When is your last day? Ann was suggesting having a BBQ all together with the leftovers from the Fiesta. That could be a good way of sending you off if you could come. You will keep in touch, won't you? We are like your babies....

Yolanda - WRA Treasurer

Dear Misak

Just to say all the best in the future and it has been great to work with you. I know how much you have put in to the WAP project. You will be missed. Kind regards and best wishes.
Ruth Wood & Vera Scott - Feltham Arts

WELCOME MISAK

Misak

It was nice to hear from you again. It is good that you are now back with Hayashen, where you can contribute positively to the wellbeing and needs of the charity. I wish you and your family well.

Regards

Ben Tamizian - ben.tamizian@btinternet.com

Hello Misak

Congratulations on your new appointment of Chief Executive Officer at CAIA. I wish you well in this.

Kind regards, Yours sincerely

Denise Apkarian Panattoni - d.panattoni@londonmet.ac.uk

Dear Misak

Congratulations on being appointed CEO of CAIA. I'd almost given up hope of seeing anything like this happen. You have an unenviable task but, with your experience and drive, you have a good chance of succeeding.

Good Luck. PM.

Dear Misak

Congratulations, it proves that persistence and honesty gets paid. Well done. I wish you all the best for the future.

Regards. Lolo.

Dear Misak,

Thank you so much for the excellent photo of Mariegold and myself at the CAIA lunch the other Sunday. It was very nice to see you again. With best wishes for the future, John Heron - john.heron8@btopenworld.com

Misak,

I will not be back until late summer, but promise to come and see you as soon as I am back. I got renewal forms for CAIA membership and at the time was not aware that you had returned, so I threw them away. Can you send me renewal forms to my address in the US so I can pay for my membership. Here is the address just in case you do not have it. Good to see you back in charge, let me know if I can help in any way. Best Regards
Michael Avedian - michael.avedian@sbcglobal.net

Dear Misak,

It is really good to see you back in your rightful place again but I don't under estimate the work that lies ahead.

I don't think anyone else can pull it off & it won't be easy. But at least you're back & can make a start.

Thanks again & best wishes to you & Diana.

VS.

COMMUNITY NEWS

DIVERSE COMMUNITIES CELEBRATE TOGETHER AT EALING TOWN HALL



On Saturday 25 June 2005, the CAIA took part in the *Annual Refugee Week* event in Ealing Town Hall organised by *Ealing Refugee Forum*. Dancers from the Armenian Dance group 'Aghtamar' joined many others performers from various communities to promote their cultural traditions and heritage.

Several hundred members of the public as well as various communities enjoyed the programme of events as well as the multi-cultural food available during the break. The events formally opened by ERF. Chair Mr Edmond Michaels at 5.30pm, followed by speeches and supporting messages from the Worshipful Mayor LB of Ealing, Mr Michael Elliot, Cllr. Ranjhi Dheer, Mr Piara Khabra, MP for Ealing and Southall.

"ARMENIA - PEOPLE AND PLACES"

A unique and fascinating photographic Exhibition will take place at The Towneley Hall Art Gallery & Museum in Burnley, Lancashire. between Saturday, August 13th until Sunday, September 25th 2005. The exhibition features the work of local photographer Mr Luigi A Lombardi. Prints of any photographs on display will be available for purchase, with the proceeds going to the Armenian children's charity "*Childhood Planet*", whose aim is to improve the lives of under-privileged and destitute children in Armenia. "The country of Armenia is relatively unknown to the British public and Mr. Lombardi's photographic exhibition would be of great cultural and educational interest because it presents, in a unique way, a fascinating glimpse of an ancient Christian people living in a tiny, landlocked but beautiful country." says Armenian organizer Dr Natalia Ishkhanian.

A keen and experienced photographer, Mr. Lombardi wanted to capture the soul and character of the Armenian people. "Throughout their history Armenia has suffered tragedy and misfortune, but this has infused the Armenian people with characters of resilience and strength, becoming adaptable, resourceful and proud. Between themselves, they inject a cruel-to-be-kind type of humour to any situation, which helps them to survive. Despite some poor living conditions, I discovered people's kindness and generosity was very uplifting and humbling. For example, one could feel safe walking alone down a street and within the space of five minutes, be trusted to be invited into their homes for a chat and a meal.

For more information see the webpages:
www.burnley.gov.uk/towneley/whatson/index.htm and
www.bbc.co.uk/lancashire/going_out/2005/06/23/luigi_photography
 or email: armenian.exhibition@ntlworld.com

NEW WEBSITE FOR ARMENIANS IN WALES

A new website for Armenians living in Wales was launched in May 2005, aiming to bring together Armenians in Wales.

The site can be visited at: www.armenia-wales.org.

The website is a new venture and welcomes any advice, comments, feedback and well intended criticism.

MESSAGE OF SOLIDARITY

We are all Londoners

Dear Ken Livingston - Mayor of London

On behalf of the Centre for Armenian Information & Advice, its members and all Armenians who are residents of this Great City of London, we wish to express our deepest sympathy to those who were killed, injured and suffered at yesterdays atrocities.

Please feel free to pass this message and solidarity to all your colleagues at the GLA, City Hall, London Transport Authority. If there is anything we can do please do not hesitate to contact us.

Yours sincerely

Mr Vahe Paklayan - Chair

Mr Misak Ohanian - CEO

Centre for Armenian Information & Advice (CAIA)

BRITISH AMBASSADOR AND STAFF THANK ARMENIA FOR ITS SUPPORT FOLLOWING LONDON BOMBINGS

YEREVAN, July 18, ARMENPRESS:

The British Ambassador in Armenia, Thorda Abbott-Watt and the embassy staff thanked today in a message all those who have sent messages of sympathy and support following the bombings in London on 7 July. "They have valued deeply the kindness of their friends in Armenia," the message said.

In response to the letter which President Kocharian sent to British Prime Minister Tony Blair on the day of the bombings, the Ambassador on Friday sent the President the following letter:

"Your Excellency I should like to thank you sincerely for your warm and timely message of sympathy to the Prime Minister following the bombing in London on 7 July. This is a sad time for all of us. Our thoughts and prayers are with the victims and their families. But we deeply appreciate the fact that our friends share our sense of loss and outrage at this cowardly attack. We have been moved by the sympathy and kindness of Armenians of all walks of life, including those who left flowers and candles anonymously in front of the Embassy last week. Your support means a great deal to us in these troubled times. Thank you again. in a concert of their own sometime this or early next year.

AN ETHIOPIAN ODYSSEY

Annette Allen is seeking help in writing a book called "*An Ethiopian Odyssey*". The book is about her search to find nine classmates whom she last saw in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in July 1964 but her interviews and research for the book covers 90 years. Annette wants to hear if any Armenians in London or UK have parents who escaped the genocide in Van with whom she could meet and talk to?

The book will definitely be out next April, in time for the 91st anniversary of your genocide. Anyone wishing to help can e-mail: annette@annetteallen.plus.com or phone: 07968-418534.

GEORGE KURKJIAN PASSES AWAY

It is with deep regret that we heard the sad passing away of George Kurkjian.

George was a faithful servant of the Armenian Church and its people where they lived. I recall with fondness his presence at St.Sarkis Armenian Church every Sunday making everyone visitor-feeling welcome. He was a respected community figure and an untiring charitable worker for the most disadvantaged Armenians everywhere. George will always be remembered in the history of the UK Armenian community for his unique and dedicated contribution to the Armenian church, affairs and various Trusts he was involved with for many years. The CAIA was proud to have been associated with George during and after the devastating 1988 earthquake in Armenia as well as well during various campaigns to promote the Armenian cause and identity in the UK such as when in 2000 the British government failed to include the Armenian community during the 1st Holocaust Memorial day commemorative events. Indeed George was honoured by many who came to know and work with him, not least of all by the CAIA who honoured him as a patron in recognitions of the many values and charitable objectives we shared with him. We offer our deepest condolence to his kind wife Diana, brother John and all other members of his family who survive him.
Misak Ohanian.

BOOK REVIEWS

MY BROTHERS JOURNEY - An American's Fateful Journey to Armenia IB Tauris (ISBN -1-85043-635-5)

Markar Melkonian at Hayashen 27th February 2005

Markar Melkonian's visit to London for the launch of his biography of his brother Monte, was a wonderful occasion for all those who were there. Markar himself is an engaging and charismatic speaker. He spoke with passion and honesty about his brother but was clear in pointing out that Monte had his faults too.

The author read from his book, and given its quality, it must have been difficult to select which passages to read.

Markar's account of the Melkonian childhood in America seemed quite

typical, save for a vague recognition that there was something different about the old and tattooed men and women that used to live in their neighbourhood. This was their first contact with the genocide of their ancestors.

The Hayashen audience was then told about the defining point in both brothers young lives, but especially Monte's. This was when they were confronted with the realisation that something awful had happened to the Armenians in the Ottoman Empire. The Melkonian family had decided to traverse Europe by road, and eventually found themselves moving into modern day Turkey, and deeper still towards the town of their origin, Marsovan. The family found themselves stood outside the house from where their ancestors had fled the cruelties of the massacres, and Markar explained how the Christian symbols on the houses had been crudely hacked off. He also told how his father brusquely dealt with a Turkish beggar-woman, then turned to his young family explaining that the Turks had already taken more than enough from the Armenians. This episode like many in Markar's talk, was personally poignant, since I recalled being approached by a Turkish student in Van, and having to hold my tongue when he uttered the words "Welcome to my country".

The story moved quickly through the years to talk about Monte's life as an Armenian militiaman in Lebanon, where the brothers fought alongside each other. He told how through ingenuity Monte managed to turn back an attack on a district by making it appear that there were a number of Armenian gunmen defending positions instead of this one brave and selfless man.

The less savoury side of the Armenian liberation issue was discussed, and it was the indiscriminate acts of violence that led to the death of many innocents under the self-serving and mendacious leader of the Secret Army, Hagop Hagopian, that persuaded Monte to break away from that group.

Markar then touched upon Monte's experiences in a French prison. As one might expect, Monte led a number of strikes whilst in jail, more often than not over injustices that he felt had been meted out by the authorities.

As I pointed out earlier, Markar is no apologist for his brother. He claimed that some of Monte's actions prior to his time in Artsakh weighed very heavily on his mind. It seems that 'Avo' did not take his role in the Armenian struggle lightly at all, and throughout the talk we began to see a man of great integrity who was quick to acknowledge errors that occurred either through accident or design. And so to Artsakh and some of the decisive action of which Monte was a major part. Markar detailed Monte's almost naïve trust in people who he called 'good guys'. By all accounts this was one of Monte's most common phrases, and Markar saw it in action in 1991 after Monte and long-time sweetheart Seta were married at Geghard. Markar ended the formal part of the afternoon and was patient and willing to accept questions from the floor. He then took time to sign copies of the book and conduct a radio interview, and was the last to leave the hall. It was quite obvious to us in Hayashen that an awful amount of research has gone into this book, given that the nature of Monte's life engendered a great degree of secrecy. Through Markar's honest and passionate re-telling, it was easy for those of us who did not know Monte to feel the presence of this Armenian hero and legend.

As for the book itself, it is impossible to put down. It is superbly written and works on a number of levels. The many sub-dramas in this incredible life include the love for a brother and the idealism of an Armenian wanting to do something important for his country at tremendous personal risk.

There is humour within 'My Brother's Road'; and in his life with Seta, a

modern love story. However what comes across loud and clear is that Monte Melkonian was a unique and extraordinary individual who possessed amazing integrity alongside a fierce passion for the people and country of Hayastan. If you are a proud Armenian you have to have this book in your collection. Gregory Topalian

Copies are available from CAIA.