

Armenian American Cultural Association and the Armenian Embassy Introduce Author Agop Hacikyan to the Metropolitan Washington Area Community

By **Negar M. Joy**

Washington, D.C.: Agop Hacikyan, Canadian-Armenian author, historian and professor of literature, does not need an introduction to the Armenian community. He has been researching and writing about Armenian literature for over 3 decades. He has written over 20 books and has compiled and published one of the most comprehensive anthologies of Armenian literature. For anyone who may have missed his 20 or so previous books, however, the Armenian American Cultural Association (AACA) and the Armenian Embassy, offered an opportunity of an introduction that one couldn't possibly refuse.

On March 26th, more than 100 people were treated to an appearance by Mr. Hacikyan,

Rita Balian, President & CEO of AACA. "In a life time, we accumulate many treasures, knowledge, friendships and personal wealth. It is through books, however, that we pass on to our children and future generations the legacy of our history and ancestral values. That is why such literary events are of such importance to the Armenian community outside of Armenia".

His Excellency Ambassador Kirakossian delivered the introductory remarks: "We are delighted to welcome you to the Armenian soil in Washington DC. It is as always a pleasure for the Embassy of the Republic of Armenia to be joining the Armenian American Cultural Association in bringing you activities highlighting the excellence of

things Armenian; the children's paintings on the wall, the warmth and sincere welcome I received from friends and strangers, the eagerness of everyone to show me around and to introduce me to even more people, the spirit of hospitality that had filled the large dining room table with home-made food, and the sense of belonging that everyone seemed to embrace in the piece of their Armenia that the Embassy offered, that made me wish that I too belonged to this community.

The musical performance by the "New Names Association", a group of eight young Armenian talents, set the perfect tone for the presentations to follow. Sonia Medzadourian Crow, Vice President of AACA and the Emcee of the evening expressed the senti-

the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, its locales ranging from the busy streets of Constantinople, to an exotic Turkish harem and the merciless Syrian desert. The novel has received critical and popular acclaim wherever it has appeared and has been compared to "Gone With The Wind" and "Dr. Zhivago." Mr. Hacikyan generously explained the background of the creation of this novel while Sonia Crow eloquently read passages from the book.

"A Summer Without Dawn" is but one of many literary works by Mr. Hacikyan that bring history to life. Mr. Hacikyan has, with three others, prepared two volumes of an English-language anthology, a collection of the best Armenian literary creations. Levon Avdoyan from the Library of Congress discussed this recently published anthology, "Heritage of Armenian Literature". Dr. Avdoyan amused the audience with his tale of desperate search – with no avail – for information on Armenian literature for a high school project, to point out the significance of this anthology, which now makes the best of Armenian literature available to non-Armenian readers. "The collection of translated Armenian primary sources, spanning fifteen centuries, from the oral traditions of the pre-alphabet era and the Golden Age of the fifth century to the blossoming of literature from the Middle Ages to the 18th century, ought to be a treasured reference book for every Armenian household which wants the sources themselves as opposed to oral traditions handed down to them orally", he said.

Thanks to a donation from AACA, now the library of the Armenian Embassy also holds copies of Mr. Hacikyan's



Photo courtesy of Dr. Levon Avdoyan

Author Agop Hacikyan, Ph.D

works. Rita Balian, presented copies of each of the Anthology volumes, as well as the novel "A Summer Without Dawn" to the Ambassador. A similar package was presented to Congressman Frank Pallone for his library.

Given the political background of "A Summer Without Dawn", it was fitting that Congressman Pallone's remarks concentrated on the Genocide recognition efforts on Capitol Hill. "We will soon be introducing legislation that will place the Armenian genocide along side with the Jewish Holocaust, and the genocides in Rwanda and Cambodia in order to bring true justice to the history of the Armenian people."

This Literary Evening was no ordinary "meet the author" event, as the author was no ordinary writer. "Mr. Hacikyan's devotion, both literary and personal, to [Armenian] roots, and the brief but phenomenal display of talent by the young musicians from Armenia, provided an occasion that filled all who were present with a profound sense of pride.", said Ed Alexander.

For more information about AACA and its programs, please contact Armenian American Cultural Association, Inc. at: Tel: 703-416-2555, Fax: 703-416-2557, e-mail: usaaca@aol.com.



Photo courtesy of Dr. Levon Avdoyan

Program participants L to R are: Rita Balian, AACA President; Author Agop Hacikyan, Ph.D; Congressman Frank Pallone, Co-Chair of Congressional Caucus on Armenian Issues; Amb. Arman Kirakossian; Sonia Medzadourian Crow, Esq. AACA Vice President and MC; Scholar Levon Avdoyan, Ph.D, Near East Section at the Library of Congress

with an introduction from His Excellency, Ambassador Arman Kirakossian and remarks by Congressman Frank Pallone, during an enchanted evening devoted to Armenian literature, with an interlude of Armenian music, at the Armenian Embassy. Dr. Hacikyan was introduced to the Washington area Armenian community under the joint auspices of the Armenian Embassy and the Armenian American Cultural Association (AACA). AACA annually brings the Armenian community of Metropolitan Washington together to promote cultural and educational activities, and to introduce Armenian talents to the Nation's Capital. "Written words are lasting treasures", explains

artistic and literary talent of our Armenian heritage."

Armenian-American author and former US diplomat Ed Alexander echoed these sentiments: "In a diplomatic career spanning thirty years, I have hosted and organized many cultural events at American Embassies in West and East Europe featuring stage and screen stars, famous musicians, writers and poets. But the evening at the Armenian Embassy gave me an unparalleled pleasure because it was all-Armenian and spoke to my ethnic roots."

The pleasures of this literary evening started well before the formal presentations began. Being one of a handful of non-Armenians in the audience, I was enchanted by so many

ment of the audience when she said: "one day, everyone will know the names of these amazing young talents." Their delight in performing, and their superior musical abilities made them a pleasure to listen to. Aram Khachaturian's "Sable Dance" was perfectly reproduced and ignited a heartfelt "ahh" from the young Armenian woman sitting next to me, that without words, revealed a deep sense of pride, homesickness and belonging.

It's the same sense of belonging and pride that Mr. Hacikyan's latest novel "A Summer Without Dawn" skillfully portrays. The book is the story of one family's struggle to survive the Turkish massacre of the Armenian people, told against the background of



Photo courtesy of Daron Bolat

On behalf of AACA, Rita Balian presents the three volumes of author A. Hacikyan to Congressman Frank Pallone for his library.