

# YAVAŞGAMATS GAMATSYAVAŞ

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Issue No:1

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THE SEMI-OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF "GAMATS GAMATS / YAVAŞ YAVAŞ SUMMER SCHOOL" - 9 - 18 AUGUST 2005 - ANTAKYA

## Becoming friends 'arag-çabuk'

by Lusine  
GRIGORYAN

After the 2-hour flight the group from Armenia was in Istanbul at last. The first thing they saw from the airplane was the lights of the metropolitan city with 12 million people. Then the airport: everyone around spoke Turkish, there were Turkish posters on every step -strange & vague feelings... At last they are in Turkey, the country they had so much heard and read about.

After 4 or 5 hours of sleep they were woken up by the voice in the small hours of the morning - call of ezan. They left at 8 in the morning and within two hours they were able to see the sea, the Süleymaniye mosque & shops ...

Everyone was waiting impatiently to meet the other 12 young people with whom they were to spend the next 10 days in the summer school. After half an hour participants from Armenia and Turkey were chatting & cracking jokes in the bus. They even started learning languages of each other. Young people from Armenia were surprised when a girl from Turkey started to speak Armenian. It was an Armenian girl Talar Boğuş who lives in Istanbul. Küçük Bebek - little baby, this is the first Turkish expression Magda from Yere-



There were 73 applications, and only 24 could be invited to the summer school. There are 11 students and 2 teachers from Armenia and 13 students and 9 teachers from Turkey. And also many adventures waiting for them in Antakya.

van learned. "At first I had double feelings because I didn't know exactly what I was going to face. Fortunately after communicating with the participants from Turkey I had palpably better feelings", Magda said . During the three hour Adana-Antakya bus trip she found out that even handsome Turkish guys are sort of jealous of Turkish girls' idol Tarkan. Magda found it very funny. One of those handsome guys Mehmet Ali was singing with his new Armenian friends during the trip. It turned out that Mali knows Armenian songs. It was not only very surprising but it also encouraged Armenians to sing Turkish songs with others. In spite of the awful hot weather & uncom-

fortable conditions, the atmosphere in the bus was very friendly and kind. After the bus trip the group reached Antakya. Everyone rushed out to have shower and eat something. Though the hotel was really nice, the participants were certainly disappointed that there was no swimming pool.

The first day of the school ended with a stroll in Antakya - a small and ancient town, which probably has many stories and secrets for guests. The participants have 9 days to discover at least some of them, of course with the help of their very experienced teachers. "It is very good that we did not talk about problems on the first day. I think first, we should

"gamats-gamats" know each other" said Mali-the only participant who was born in Antakya. So let me agree with him.

### Attention!

Here's some useful tips about the new Turkish Lira! On 1 January 2005, Turkey dropped 6 zeros from the lira. But until 2006, we keep on using the old Turkish Lira as well. So, this means:

The green 20 YTL (new TL) is equal to the green 20.000.000 TL (old TL).

The red 10 YTL (new TL) is equal to the red 10.000.000 TL (old TL) etc. And they are both in use. There are also the coins in use, for example, 1 lira (the biggest coin which looks like the coin for 2 Euro) is equal to 1.000.000 TL.

Also, the currency:

1 € = 1.6 YTL (1.600.000 TL)  
1 \$ = 1.3 YTL (1.300.000 TL)

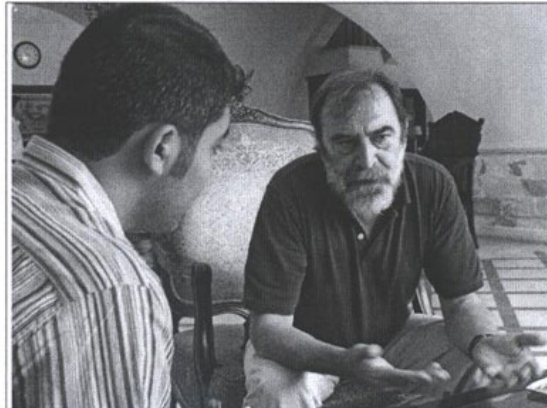
# “We must understand each other”

by Celil KAYA

The Chair of the Helsinki Citizens' Assembly (hCa) Murat Belge gave an exclusive interview to Yavas Gamats about the aims and his expectations from the summer school. Belge says that they wish to make the participants understand each other.

Murat Belge, the Chair of hCa stated that, "Understanding each other is really important for the people, because failing to understand the other and showing empathy lie at the core of all the problems." Belge emphasized the importance of empathy; "If all the people had the ability of understanding there would be less problems / conflicts. The way of understanding passes through knowing each other. That is why we gathered people here and gave them a chance to know the others and introduce themselves."

Belge underlined that Helsinki Citizens' Assembly had similar organizations previously in the 90's during the ongoing conflicts in the Balkans. He said, "All the participants were thinking quite different when they came. Of course dialogue is important for every people, but more necessary for those who are in conflict."



Belge gave an exclusive interview to Yavas Gamats

Belge explained his expectations from the school and said: "It is not possible to learn or teach everything, but it can be a start for the future. But we can learn how to sing together and at the end of the school the participants can say "I have friends in Istanbul/ Yerevan".

## Antakya is an example

The hCa Chair said Antakya is a good example for the participants as a multicultural city with several linguistic and religious communities living together.

## A good chance to break stereotypes

by Mariam SARGSYAN

Before sending the applications for the Gamats Gamats / Yavaş Yavaş Summer School, all of the participants had their own expectations from this seminar. Participants are very happy to meet, and to get together. Some of their expectations have come true, and some of them are on the way.

The Armenian participants thought it would be a formal seminar with formal relations. Some of them had stereotypical thoughts about traditional problems between Turkish and Armenian people. But they try to get away with these stereotypes. The participants realized that they both were brought up in a standard way and thus that they do not know each other so well. Most of the Armenians didn't even believe that they would be invited to Turkey.

"I did not believe that I would go to Turkey. I began to believe it when I learned that I am invited to this seminar. I thought that there will be more time for fun. I liked Istanbul very much", Edgar Ghazaryan says.

Talar Bogus is an Armenian but she was born in Istanbul, and lives in Turkey. She has never been to Armenia, so

she is very happy to see Armenians from Armenia. "I am happy to be a part of this reconciliation process. I like learning new things every second. I have heard a lot about the delicious cuisine of Antakya. I think I will have good memories." Talar says.

Dikran Bertizian is also an Armenian, from Syria. He says that it is a good chance for Armenian and Turkish people to get to know each other. He thinks that the organizers try to do their best to build mutual trust.

Young generation in Turkey is very optimistic about the relations between two countries. They want to make new friends, and new acquaintances; in fact, they try to learn Armenian so that they can work better for mutual understanding.

One of the Turkish participants, Dilara, said that the academics of the summer school are very important for her. She wants to learn a lot from them and she herself wants to become an academic in the future.

"For me this seminar is a good chance to make new friends and to meet new people. If there is any problem, we shall try to solve it."

As our friend Volkan said, it is a peaceful student meeting and we are trying to "deconstruct" history. Living and learning together will give us a chance to be more open for mutual negotiation.

Dilara, one of the participants from Turkey, said that the academics of the summer school are very important for her. She wants to learn a lot from them and she herself wants to become an academic in the future. "For me this seminar is a good chance to make new friends and to meet new people. If there is any problem, we shall try to solve it."

# YAVAŞGAMATS GAMATSYAVAŞ

12/08/2005  
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THE SEMI-OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF "GAMATS GAMATS / YAVAŞ YAVAŞ SUMMER SCHOOL" - 9 - 18 AUGUST 2005 - ANTAKYA

## Two faces of Ararat meet



Armenia and Turkey are neighbors, but suspicion prevails in both of the societies about each other's attitudes. This summer school is bold new step in developing relations from the grassroots. Sevan Nişanyan's course on multiculturalism echoed the affirmation that peaceful coexistence is not a utopia, but has been experienced in various places throughout history, including the town the school is taking place.

by Mehmet MUTLU

During the past few years, interest towards the Armenian Issue has increased, due to the fact of the recognition of this historical evidence by several states. However, Turkish government and the Turkish historiography continue to distort and deny the historical facts.

### Unique chance

These policies of the Turkish government cause the postponing of the Armenian Conference which was going to be held at Boğaziçi University in Turkey. Just a few days after the conference postponed, I had a mail from Helsinki Citizens Assembly about 'Gamats Gamats/Yavaş Yavaş Summer School' project. I think that is a

unique chance for mutual dialogue between Armenians and Turks. Therefore, I decided to be part of this summer school.

Now I am on the way to Antakya. Bus is going "gamats gamats". I am

watching outside: mountains, forests, rivers, seas... Natural and cultural geography is too different and too similar at same time, and also completes each other. Like two faces of Ararat. When I was leaving capital

of Turkey, Ankara, where the official ideology has been constructed, behind on the way to Antakya, I realized that the official ideology and the social prejudices regarding Armenians must be left behind as well.

## Veni, vidi, happy...

The participants are voicing that they are optimistic about the relations they are developing.

"We created a space here in which emotions and ideas circulate means democracy for me. Apart from written and visual sources, daily life and such face to face experience are unique and inevitable to have empathy and recreate our stories as well as history." (Eda Çakmakçı)

"At the beginning, I was not sure whether it would be helpful, but now, I realize that for understanding each other, you should get face to face and share moments. I am so glad to be a participant of this summer school. Hope to understand each othermore!" (Melih)

"I wanted to participate because I want to see how similar we are. And now I see that we are very similar." [Mehmet Ali (Mali)]

"I really wonder other cultures so I decided to come here. I gain nice friendships so, I'm happy to be here. To sum up, I came here to meet with new people who belong to the other culture and country." (Elif Genç)

"I strongly wanted to have such an experience. One of my motivations was having friends from Armenia. I am so happy for this harmonious atmosphere that we share." (Talar)

# “Art is an oppositional force”

by F. Dilara DEMİR

Yavas Gamats interviewed one of the most famous actresses of the Turkish cinema, Hale Soygazi. Soygazi won a prize as Miss Beauty in Turkey and then in Europe, in the year 1973. In



Soygazi has been in the cinema since 1973 and took roles in 45 movies.

this exclusive interview, Soygazi talked about herself, on the possible contributions of art and the cinema on peace, and she also shared her opinions about the hCa organisation. Soygazi has been in the cinema since 1973. She acted in lead roles in about 45 movies.

Among her widely known movies, the ones she likes best are *Bir Yudum Sevgi*, *Bir Demet Menekşe* and *Maden*. Soygazi won the Golden Orange “Best Actress” Award with *Bir Yudum Sevgi* (A Sip of Love). In *Bir Demet Menekşe* (A Bouquet of Violet) written by the well-known novelist Selim İleri and directed by Zeki Ökten, she played the part of a poor but beautiful young girl who is duped by her lover as well as her best friend. *Maden* (Mine) is probably the most well-known among her films. It is based on a story about miners, who are exploited by their union leaders apart from their bosses slowly gaining consciousness of their own conditions of life.

Talking on the role of art in building up peace she said, “Art is an opposi-

tional force by definition. Art makes people think again, makes them critical and creates a broader perspective”.

According to Soygazi art contributes to a critical questioning of life in the broadest sense. In response to a question as to how she would feel about a joint film by and on Armenians and Turks, she said, “If there would be a good film project carried out by Armenians and Turks together, this could help towards reaching beyond the memorized clichés and forming a more realistic grasp on reality as well as creating better empathy”.

Finally, we asked her about her opinions of the hCa. She said: “It is a fresh start for the future. Discussion in a free and open-minded environment is very important and hard to find in general”. Soygazi stressed that this project is a experimental learning process in which there is a real face-to-face recognition and a first hand experience. “Hopefully, this meeting will result in achieving mutual understanding,” she added.

## Survival dictionary

by Mariam SARGSYAN  
Celil KAYA

Barev	: Merhaba
Bari luys	: Günaydın
Bari yereko	: İyi akşamlar
Bari gişer	: İyi geceler
Bari galust	: Hoş geldin(iz)
Hacoğutyun	: Hoşça kal(ın)
Ayo	: Evet
Voç	: Hayır
Turkia	: Türkiye
Hayastan	: Ermenistan
Turkeren	: Türkçe
Hayeren	: Ermenice
Vontz es ? ek?	: Nasılsın? sınız?
Lav em	: İyiyim.
Lav çem	: İyi değilim
Anuned inç e?	: Adın ne?
İm anune..... e.	: Benim adım .....dır.
Azat es ays gişer?	: Bu akşam boş musun?
Knerek! Zbağvats em.	: Üzgünüm, doluyum.

## A long hot summer day...

by Magda Markosyan

I woke up very early this morning. Well, at least I thought I did. Because of this feeling I thought I hadn't had a good sleep and wanted to go to bed again when suddenly I noticed a missed alarm on my cell phone: it was 9:48! Our classes are supposed to start at 10 o' clock sharp, so I was late, for breakfast and plus for class.

Our day started with Sezin Oney's lecture on conflict solving. We split in groups and had a conflict simulation in which we had negotiations where everyone had a role to play. The workshop was followed by Murat Belge's lecture on “Reading and Deconstructing History”. During the lecture he talked about the issue of the Armenian massacre, which from my point of view is the major obstacle for the development of Armenian-Turkish relations.

He also mentioned the role of the

government in deconstructing the history; pointing out that every country wants to have a clear past. After this session Sevan Nisanyan gave a lecture on “Multicultural, multilingual, multi-religious, multiethnic, complex character of Turkey and Antakya”.

**Don'tknowian...**

After the group work and the dinner, most of the group went to kick it at a disco club in downtown. I missed that part because I was extremely tired. Not everything was lost though because after they had come back some of us stayed up until late at night with the company of Toygar and his guitar: we sang songs in Armenian, Turkish, Russian, English and all kinds of made-up languages like “Bananian”, “Comedian”, and “Don'tknowian”. If everything goes on like this, by the end of the summer school we will have learned as much of Turkish as if we have had classes during the summer school.

# YAVAŞGAMATS GAMATSYAVAŞ

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Toygar Halistoprak  
Mustafa Kuleli  
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## The vicious cycle of hatred

by Melih KAHRAMAN

As it comes from the human nature, we always want to be a member of a group. It can be a religious group or a community etc., but it gives us a chance to communicate ourselves easily. In my opinion, nationalism as a doctrine had been used by nearly every state to manipulate the masses. With the description of nationalism, you get a flag, a language, a piece of territory, which somehow create something for you to defend or to die for. As we see, nationalism is really strong because it captures you from your heart, which is who you are!

From the beginning of this summer school, we have been going into details of nationalism in both sides. It was claimed that nations always need enemies to exist; otherwise you will

not be able to use nationalism. By giving you the name of "Turk", you do not only describe yourself, but you also create an "other" as an opponent to you, an opponent which you need in order to exist. You are a Turk and others are something else who, for sure, have aims over you because in the international area the system is always a "self-help system" which tells you to watch your back.

I felt the need to get the opinions of my friends from this summer school because they are the citizens of two different countries that have borders in addition to a shared history. However, having borders make relations strained; because problems mainly include territories which happens to be a main and significant element of a country's existence. So Armenians and Turks have lived in the same region for a long time, but in the history

books of Turkey, Armenians are told to be the enemies that have demands on our territory. In the streets, there are many jokes that include humiliation for Armenians.

For example what I mostly hear in our talks with Turkish friends was that when you say "Are you an Armenian?" some say "Estağfurullah" which is same with saying "Oh no, this is not possible because it is not a good thing". When we come to the Armenian side; in the times that Armenians were part of the USSR, we cannot see a lot about genocide but after Armenia got its freedom from Moscow, the genocide issue started to take a big part in books. One of the students from this school told me that some diaspora parties, which are more nationalist, work on the issue of genocide much more than the parties in Armenia do. She added that it cannot be said that there is certain hatred towards Turks in history books of schools.

### Vicious cycle

To sum up; as we mentioned at the beginning, when you create the "other", you also become an "other" yourself; so it is a kind of a vicious cycle of hatred, which will eventually address you at the end. In the benefit of myself, I should learn to think of the "other" at a certain point, which means that everyone in this world has a right to live and deserves some respect, whereas the nationalist doctrine keeps selfishness in its center, which is actually a way of harming yourself with the hands of others. I say we need a counter doctrine as soon as possible. I am sure this summer school is a small step to find this counter doctrine, which will be the product of new generations.



Participants visited the St. Peter Church, one of the first churches of the world.

# Yavaş Gamats: Behind the scene

by Talar BOĞUS

Yavaş Gamats interviewed with Sevgi Özçelik and Didem Ermiş from Helsinki Citizens' Assembly (hCa) about the preparation process of the summer school. They stated that the process of the summer school has started first by arranging the draft seminar program. Then they proceeded with determining the lecturers by consulting to the members of the *Commission of Armenian Issues* of the hCa and setting the criteria for the participants. Ermiş explained that they reached to the participants from Turkey through academicians of their universities and for the participation of Armenian students the collaborated with Helsinki Citizens' Assembly of Armenia, Armenian UN Association and Center for Public Dialogue Development.



Sevgi and Didem were worried when the Armenian Conference in Boğaziçi University was canceled in late April

According to their database, there were 75 applications from which 24 were selected. And now, there are 40 students, trainers and lecturers in our summer school.

About the difficulties that they had come across, Özçelik states that "During the same period, when Conference on Armenians in Boğaziçi University was cancelled we started worrying. But, the next day we got the first applications and gained our motivation back.

Sevgi and Didem mentioned that Antakya was chosen for the summer school due to its multi-lingual, multi-religious, multi-cultural and complex character. Finally, when we asked about the dates of the summer school, they said: "Of course, it was not a coincidence. During this period there are the festivals in Vakıflı Köy, the Armenian village. So, we have the opportunity to attend" they added.

## We; as a part of the solution...

By Toygar HALİSTOPRAK

Multilingual musical night's morning was a happy morning for me. Everyone also says that it was a good night for the second day of the summer school.

We started to the second day with Murat Belge. It was our second meeting with him and issue of the day was comparative literature, which his professionalization is about. That was a good chance for us, because he is one of the respected professors in Turkey on his own issue. After a delicious lunch, we were ready to listen to the seminar of Sevan Nisanyan. It was about the historical events about Armenians in Turkey and other ethnical structures of Anatolia. He has a wide range of knowledge about mosaics of Anatolia. At the end of the seminar,



A piece from Mosaic Museum.

Sinan Gökçen said that it was time to go out, but unfortunately with the same bus which we came from Adana to Antakya. It was something like a joke for everyone, but also the truth. First we visited the Mosaics Museum. It was forbidden to use flash; therefore I was

able to take only few pictures. Our next station was St. Peter Church which is one of the first churches in the world. It was engraved within an inaccessible mountain, and should be seen by the people who want to see interesting places. Finally, we went to Harbiye, which is a district including one of the biggest waterfall of Turkey and we had our dinner there.

To tell the truth, before I went there, I was thinking that the environment would not be warm enough to gain new friendships but, now I see that it was just a prejudice. Hence we are usually together, speaking, joking, discussing about some issues. And I can say that, in this way, as the young people of the two societies, we can be a part of the solution which is long overdue.

### Survival dictionary

**Bu ne kadar? İnç arji**  
**Başka bir tane verebilir misiniz? Uriş tıvek!**  
**İndirim yapamaz mısınız? Gine içil!**  
**İki tane alırsam indirim yapar mısınız? Kiçnek yete**  
**yergu hat vertsinem**  
**Kaç dolar? Dolarav inçkan klini**  
**Dolarla ödeyebilir miyim? Garam dolarov vicarel**  
**Başka ne önerirsiniz? Uriş inç garaçargeg**  
**Bu çok pahalı. Şad tang a.**  
**Bu hiç ucuz değil. Sa heç ejan çi.**  
**Nerede bulabilirim? Urge garenam kıldnal?**

# YAVAŞGAMATS GAMATSYAVAŞ

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Elif Genç  
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## We all smile in the same way!

by Dikran Bertizian

Before coming to the summer school I am sure most of us had made some pre-assumptions about how will the <other side> look like! Some of us even expected a very big cultural shock that would hinder the process of building a mutual understanding. Fortunately these pre-assumptions turned out to be far away from reality!

Actually after spending some time with each other and undergoing different situations we were quite often buzzed with the exclamations like "Hey! We do this in Turkey too!" or "We have this type of food in Armenia, too!"

### More than similar

Quite funnily, these types of exclamations were usually ensued by naive debates and efforts by both sides to find out who actually owned the original idea. Nevertheless it proves to us that there are some segments in our daily lives that are more than similar to each other. Something we were absolutely unaware about! This shows how much our cultures are closely related to each other. Something that makes us feel we have a lot in common.

But it is not only the folk tales, superstitions, words, etc. that we have in common. Our sense of humor is quite similar as we saw that we managed to get along well with each other quickly and we already became friends! And I am sure we will find more common and shared cultural values in the days to come that will further expand our understanding of each other.

To finish my article I would say that it really is not important how many differences we have and under what



**Yes, we may have differences but we have lots of similarities as well. For example, we all smile in the same way!**

kind of educational system we have been raised there is always some- thing in common after all WE ALL SMILE IN THE SAME WAY!

## Sisterhood of grandmothers...

- ✓ Nazar Boncuğu- Small blue eye which is quite common in Turkey. Strangely we have it in Armenia as well but as an ornament rather than the guardian of luck.
- ✓ In both countries grandmas always believe in spilling water on the doorstep as we set off for a long journey - to bring success to us!
- ✓ It turns out that Britons are the only ones that believe black cats bring luck!
- ✓ When a glassy plate falls and breaks we say "The devil just vanished". This is in Armenia. In Turkey the devil is most likely to lose its eyes!
- ✓ Most of Armenians believe that if they eat Aghi Blit (a very salty piece of dry bread that has been blessed in the church) on the St. Sarkis eve and sleep without drinking a single drop of water they will naturally become very thirsty and by luck they will see someone in their dream that night who will be giving water to them. The person who gives water is believed to be your future partner of life!

# The best with a minimum budget

by Volkan YILMAZ

We are having a good time, learning and discussing core issues like peace, conflict transformation, having debates on Turkish-Armenian relations and so on. Does any of us think about how this beautiful organization could be possible? Yavaş Gamats



Yasemin Şan was responsible of all details of the logistical preparation of the summer school.

interviewed Yasemin Şan, who is responsible for the logistics of the Summer School. To make things more

clear, logistics include the organization of travel, accommodation, extra curricular activities. It seems a little boring, but the success of the summer school depends so much on these mundane works.

The first thing I considered in the interview that there are many people working behind the scenes whom we are not aware of. To exemplify, the captains of the buses, waiters and waitresses in the Savon Hotel, people worked to organize the summer school from hCa of Turkey and Armenia were all the ones we should thank to. It is a team work; they all contributed to this pro-peace contra-conflict student organization. Lastly, Ms. Şan affirmed that the preparation process of the organization took two months.

What are the key issues of the logistics? The most significant thing to consider in such an organization is to

look for conformity and security. "Thus, we are staying in the best hotel in the region" Ms. Şan told. Additionally, they decided the timing of the summer school by considering the starting dates of universities in both of the countries. In addition, being an NGO respecting the human life, hCa prepared health insurances for all participants. Thanks to hCa, Mali had a doctor immediately and was sent to hospital to diagnose his illness.

## Comfort and cost

She declared that "The Council of Europe funded this summer school. In addition, there are some supporters and sponsors of the program which we will declare their names in the forth coming."

Finally, Yasemin Şan made some suggestions for us who have the intention to organize such projects that "the most important thing in organizing such a summer school, one should pay attention to providing the most comfortable and secure conditions with a minimum budget. You should pay attention to both."

Thus, these information will be useful for Armenian friends mostly, yet they will invite us a similar organization in Yerevan. You will, right?

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## Going beyond where diplomats have gone...

by Elif GENÇ

Before I came here I was wondering what kind of things and people were waiting for me. However, when I have met them, I felt as if I already have known all of them for years. I said to myself, "Why was I shocked? Of course I would feel like that".

Armenians and Turks had shared the same geography, the same culture, and the same history for a very long time. Yesterday in the lectures of Ferhat Kentel and Nazan Maksudyan, we talked about nationalism, mutual perceptions, diaspora, immigrations, relations between two sides and the phenomena of Turkish and Armenian nationalism.

### Learning about Armenians

The most interesting, beneficial lecture – for me and I'm sure according to everyone- was Sevan Nisanyan's.

Because I have learned who Armenians are, when they had entered the stage of history, where they had established their first community, what their conflicts were along the history and where they inhabited.

### Dolma, kebab, köfte, lavaş...

Unfortunately, I felt so bad last night that I did not go out after dinner. A group of people went to Vakıflı Köyü which is the last Armenian village in Turkey and for that reason which is really famous. There was a religious celebration (of the Armenians) there and the visitors said that they enjoyed it a lot. They danced – including the lecturers Murat Belge and Sevan Nisanyan – sang songs in Armenian and ate traditional foods. Ooooh my god, I wish I was there.

Different rituals, music and dances are never a problem and never will create one. In other words, we are

really close and similar in culture; we always talk about the same things and laugh to same events, jokes and nonsense; and we even cook, eat and like same foods.

Beside these, I am proud of everyone who came here and who has done such beneficial things that the diplomats could not achieve so far. Here we are discussing every notion of being humane, without resorting to violence. I believe that "future" is being built here by us, right now. I am getting to know Armenians more closely through this organization.

I'm learning some Armenian words, by the way. This is a good opportunity for me because I learn *necessary* Armenian words like "yes kez sirum em (I love you)" and then call my boyfriend and saying this to him:) We must express our love in different languages as well, mustn't we?



# YAVAŞGAMATS GAMATSYAVAŞ

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## Blessing and hospitality in Vakıflı Köy

by Eda ÇAKMAKÇI

It was the fragrance of orange gardens that welcomed us when we arrived at the Vakıflı, situated in Samandağ 15 km. away from Antakya. Apart from its fame for being one of the foremost villages implementing organic agriculture, it is the only remaining Armenian village in Turkey. It is ironic that the rural Armenian community still survives keeping their language and traditions. Before the Surp Asdvadzadzin (St. Mary) feast on Sunday, we had already took part in the preceding feast both on Friday and Saturday evenings in the village.

The Surp Asdvadzadzin feast was last one of the five major Armenian celebrations taking place throughout the year. It has been celebrated for 1,700 years in the memory of St. Mary, but also to thank God and pray for blessing. In the past, Anatolian society performed this ritual during the distribution of harvest. On that day, peasants used to gather their crops in front of the church, piled in a huge bundle. After the priest blessed

the harvest, it was distributed among the village population according to need. The same tradition is performed today with some modifications adopting it to modern times. The hospitality and cooperation spirit still continues, we had our lunch in the village eating Keşkek (Harissa) which was distributed evenly among the visitors and the village population. Instead of crops, currently there are ripe grapes. Grape had been chosen because it bears grains inside, symbolizing the fertility and the blessing of God.

When we arrived at the village at about 11.30, the sermon in the Church had already started. The atmosphere of the Church was totally different compared to the noise and crowd outside. The calm humming of the prayer in Krapar (old Armenian language) accompanied by the misty incense created a mystic and spiritual ritual. As a reminder, a tough path awaiting anyone who likes the rhyme and the flux of the Krapar and wants to learn it. There is a prerequisite of five years of education for acquiring

necessary skills in order to read and sing Krapar professionally. This language has its own musical notes called Hampartsum. Only the Priest is fluent in this language. However, many young people learn it partly.

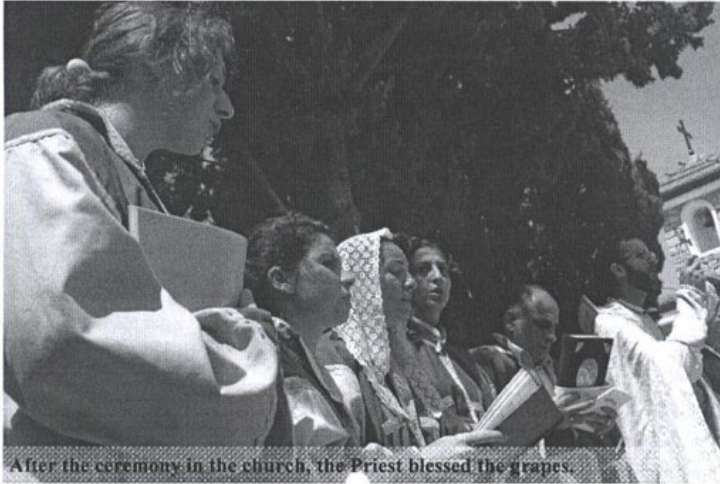
This meeting of people coming from different parts of the world such as Lebanon, Hayastan (Armenia), and different cities of Turkey provides unique environment for communicating emotions, keeping stories alive, and maintaining the relations with friends. After the ceremony in the Church, which was renovated in 1997, people gathered in its courtyard for the blessing of the grapes.

There were not only Armenian people, who gathered for this specific event. I felt that that I am part of a historical event upon talking to various people coming from many diverse backgrounds. I was hearing words of fraternity and wishes of peace from almost everyone. Blessing of the fertility of the soil turned out to be the celebration of humanity and diversity.

The oldest man of the village and his wife hosted us with lemonade made by the lemons that has just been picked up from the garden. Indeed, he himself is a living testimony of history at the age of 95.

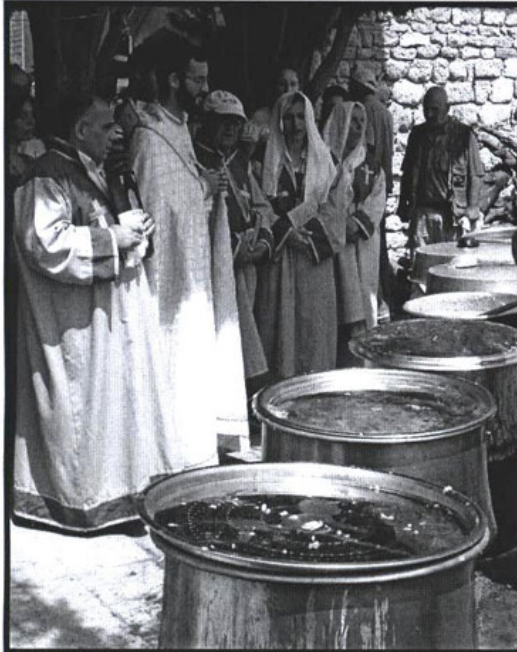
What made the whole event more astonishing was the meeting of our Armenian group with the inhabitants of Vakıflı. People from different countries that have never seen each other before were singing the same songs and had a smile on their faces as if they met friends that they had not seen for years.

As the habitat of the last Armenian village in Anatolia, Vakıflı is the proof of the abundant diversity of these lands. In spite of any turbulence, it managed to maintain peace.



After the ceremony in the church, the Priest blessed the grapes.

# Memories of a day in Vakıflı Köy



Both the harissa and the grapes were blessed by the Priest during the ceremony in the Church courtyard.

## 4 hours in Musa Ler

by Gayane VARDANYAN

The 14<sup>th</sup> of August was one of the most exciting days of my life. I never knew that there is an Armenian village in Turkey and it is one of the Musa Ler-Dagh historic villages. We have a celebration like this in Armenia for Musa Ler survival. But the feelings I had here were quite different... Many Musalertsys (people from Musa Ler) came to Vakıflı Köy that day. I talked to some of them who were from different countries and different parts of Turkey. They shared their thoughts and feelings with me.

### Preserved tradition

Mrs. Varduhi Andryan, a middle aged woman from Damascus, said that; "What I could see here is the preserved traditions and I am very happy for that. But I'm also a bit disappointed. The young generation does not speak Armenian because there is no Armenian school here". The problem of language was mentioned by many others, too.

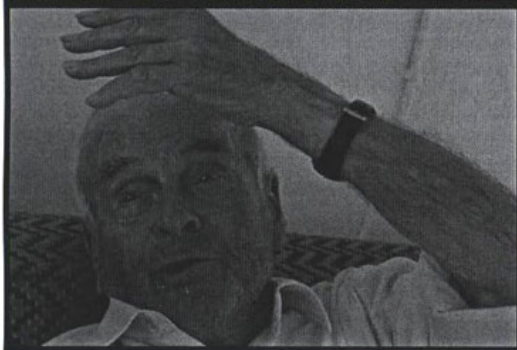
When I asked what this celebration means for them, Ani Horos, a young lady from Berlin replied that; "It's a way to preserve memories about 40 days of Musa Dagh survival".

Another young lady, Elizabeth from Istanbul told me, that it is already 4<sup>th</sup> year she is coming here for the celebration. Besides, she went to the village for two weeks a year and teaching people Armenian, Armenian history, songs and dances etc.

A 22 year old man, Arman told me that, "I come here every year because my mother is from Musa Dagh. This celebration is some kind of cultural exchange for me, because in Izmir, where I live, everything is quite different. I'm having some cognitive experience here. I am very impressed with the night before the main celebration, with the co-cooking process, collective dancing and the spirit existing here".

I think there is nothing to add.

The only thing I wish is the rekindle the future of the village with Armenians from Armenia.



The oldest man of the village, Avedis is 95.



At nights of the feast, there was a lot of vibrant music and folkloric dancing in Vakıflı.

# YAVAŞGAMATS GAMATSYAVAŞ

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Gevork Sedrakyan  
Talar Boğus  
Volkan Yılmaz  
Mustafa Kuleli  
Sinan Gökçen

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## Dilemma in shaping perceptions

by Gevorg SEDRAKYAN

The Armenian society is deeply divided between two polarized perceptions of Turkey. A critical part of the Armenians aren't still sure about which pole they belong to.

The Armenian history as it has been put forth; stories of genocide survivors and national propaganda have produced a picture of the "Turk" in the eyes of Armenians, who is a "cruel, inhuman invader".

On the other pole are the Armenians who started trading with Turkey in the crisis years of early 1990s, and those

who got to know Turkey as a tourist destination. This pole is also molded by the positive stories told by the 1915 survivors (later perpetuated in cult movies) and is enhanced with the innate trust of Armenians in human beings.

This pole is referred to as "**Modern Turks**", who are a people/nation (a single Armenian word designates the both) as we happen to be, who are civilized, who are different from the "Turk" we know from history books, who have changed a lot and who have been our neighbors for ages.

Trying to deconstruct (reiterating the

fashionable word of our summer school, "deconstructing") these perceptions, one can say that first pole of perception refers more to a homogeneous, single entity, to a group as a whole; while the latter viewpoint portrays the features of perceived person as an individual.

Hence, those belonging to the first pole face the challenge of not projecting their overall perceptions onto individual Turks. Those of the second pole similarly face the challenge of not generalizing their perceptions of Turkish individuals onto Turks as a whole nation/entity.

I think it is absolutely time imperative to note, that Turkish case for Armenians is not merely a psychological trauma/historical justice issue, but more importantly it is a security and strategic development issue for the embryo Republic of Armenia (again using our summer school's specific language).

### If your neighbor...

Literally speaking, erase everything you know about Turkish-Armenian coexistence for a second, every single thing; then, it's obvious: when your neighbor 25 times your size regards you as a dangerous enemy, something is terribly wrong here.

In the general void of information about Turkey and Turks, Armenians belonging to these opposing poles of perception, and particularly those that are absolutely undecided yet, watch closely the official domestic and foreign policies of the Turkish government to decide about what sort of a "pie chart" they will have in their minds. And readers can guess what kinds of unfortunate messages Armenians get here...



Such a portrait of friendship would be difficult to imagine for many Armenians and Turks. Nonetheless, once the 'opposite' poles meet, there is no utopia.

# Stuck in between two worlds

by Talar BOĞUS

For the nations who have diaspora, it is unavoidable to have some distance between the people of the main country and the ones who live in the historical lands; just like between people of Armenia and Armenians living in Turkey.

As Armenians were living in a wide geography, with the establishment of nation-states they remained in the boundaries of different states. In contemporary times, the Armenian population of Turkey is mainly living in Istanbul. Historically, the Armenians had a greater population and were one of the major 'millet' (nationalities) of the Ottoman Empire. But, they are counted as minority and since the First World War their identity caused some problems and in our day in parts of Turkey, there are even people who does not know what the word 'Armenian' mean.

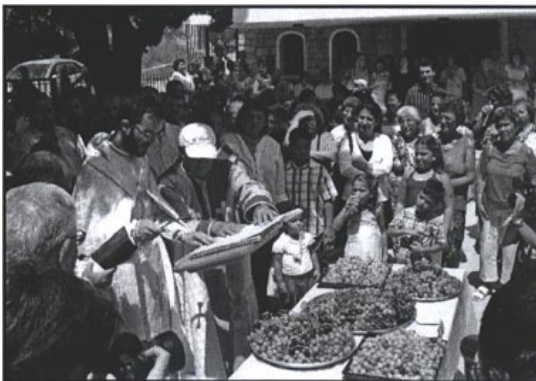
The Armenian population of Turkey differs from the people of Armenia in terms of the continuous struggle between its supra-identity and sub-identity. In this struggle, while Armenians of Armenia are living in their own land, the Armenians who are living in "historical lands" are trying to protect their sub-identity of being an Armenian. At the same time, they have to preserve their supra-identity as a Turkish citizen.

Moreover, due to the conflict between Armenia and Turkey, the people of Armenia have some prejudices towards the Armenians of Turkey and think that they have lost their cultural identity. But, the main cause of this prejudice is the lack of communication between the two groups. Armenia has won its independence very recently and adopted the concept of being a nation-state with its flag, land, language and liberty. However, as we are in the age of globalization, post-modernity and communication, total isolation is not possible. Thus, countries like Armenia who have diaspora should make a definition of "being an Armenian" which would correspond to the needs of the times. Being an Armenian does not always mean speaking Armenian, having some certain physical features etc. Similarly, again due to the lack of correspondence, Armenians who are living in diaspora also have some prejudices towards their motherland. However, it must not be forgotten that Armenia must be evaluated in its own historical development.

Besides these prejudices and the lack of communication with the Armenians of Armenia, the Armenians of Turkey also face some problems with the people of Turkey; some of these problems may be counted as being constantly obliged to explain yourself, your identity, the meaning of your name etc. In spite of all the hardship in Turkey, Armenians are struggling and achieving to protect their culture, language and social identity with their churches, newspapers, schools, language and social identity. With the light of this Armenians of Armenia should evaluate Armenians of Turkey from another perspective. And the people of Turkey should acknowledge the present identity of the Armenian culture as a integral part of their society.

The Armenians in Turkey are always obliged to define and describe themselves besides reminding people that they are one of the major values of this land. This again

results in concepts of protecting our sub-identity without getting into conflict with our supra-identity. No matter how hard it is, the "stuck-in-between" position of the Armenians can be helpful for the peace process between the two countries because they are the ones who felt the difficulty of responding to prejudices the most. That is why they can easily understand the feelings of both nations. Hence, they are a balancing element regarding problematic relations between Armenia and Turkey.



The children waited eagerly to get a hold of the grapes.

## Give Peace A Chance!

by Volkan YILMAZ

Does Turkey have an Armenian village? I confess, I even don't know whether there were Armenian villages in Turkey. Yet, the evidence was apparent enough to believe when we traveled to Vakıflı. Visiting this Armenian village made me really understand what Sevan Nişanyan was telling us about the ethnic prosperity of Anatolia.

We arrived at Vakıflı Köy in the morning and went to the ceremony in the church. Even though I couldn't catch any word of it except "khağagutyun", I felt quite peaceful.

Maybe it is because I caught the right word. We have been waiting for 'harissa' since last night, and it found to be delicious. Like many things we share, the harissa was synonymous with a Turkish dish called "keşkek". (I really got bored of the similarities, I want a culture shock!) In addition, I have met a boy from Paris, whose family lives in Kurtuluş, Istanbul. So, another confession is forthcoming; I miss Istanbul so much.

A funny thing that took place in the ceremony was that the children were impatiently waiting for the prayer to finish in order to eat the grape. The Priest was somewhat angry with them, but was trying to be polite. The baby in our group, Hazar has become the mascot of the village in a very short period of time. Old people were playing with him and so on. It reminded me of a popular song of Yeni Türkü: "We are grown up, and the world became polluted." Can we make some positive changes in the world? A mixture of the speech of the Priest of Vakıflı Köy and some of the lyrics of John Lennon can be our guiding light: "Give peace a chance in the West, the East, the South and the North of the world."

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Manan Tevosyan  
Mustafa Kuleli  
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## Goodbye untill next time



Abraham from  
Yerevan



Celil from Diyarbakir



Dicle from Istanbul



Dikran from Aleppo



Dilara from Istanbul



Eda from Istanbul



Edgar from Yerevan



Elif from Istanbul



Gamze from Istanbul



Gayane from Yerevan



Gevorg from Yerevan



Gurgen from Yerevan



Lilit from Yerevan



Lusine from Yerevan



Magda from Yerevan



Manan from Yerevan



Mariam from Yerevan



Mehmet Ali from  
Istanbul



Mehmet from Eskisehir



Melih from Istanbul



Mustafa from Istanbul



Talar from Istanbul



Toygar from Izmir



Volkan from Istanbul



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