



## Community News

# Genocide Commemoration Brings Legislators Together

WATERTOWN, MA.- The Armenian Community of Greater Boston commemorated the 83rd Anniversary of the Armenian Genocide and honored outgoing State Senator Warren Tolman at St. James Cultural Hall on Wednesday, April 22 with a moving program.

More than 500 people gathered to honor the memory of the victims of the first genocide of the 20th century. Among the guests were State Sen. Warren Tolman, State Representatives Rachel Kaprielian (D-Watertown), Peter Koutoujian (D-Newton) and Steven Tolman (D-Brighton); former State Sen. George Bachrach; candidate for the US congress John O'Connor and former mayor of Boston and US ambassador to the Vatican, Ray Flynn.

Tina Maserejian, master of ceremonies, conducted the program brilliantly in Armenian and



Former Boston Mayor Raymond Flynn

about his experience with Armenians in Watertown and the horrors that a genocide can impact upon a nation. Rep. Kaprielian spoke about her Armenian heritage, congratulated the community for the well-organized activities and promised to continue the work of Sen. Tolman during the coming years.

Salpi Salibian, who recites professionally, brought the commemoration to its peak by reciting "You Will Fall and "The Soul of the Armenians" by Vahan Tekeyan.

Rep. Koutoujian presented to the audience the legislators and candidates who had come to honor the commemoration and explained what the legislators are doing to include the Armenian Genocide in the Massachusetts school curriculum.

The main speaker in Armenian, Hratch Tchilingirian, presented beautifully the story of Genocide survivor Rosa Khederian of London, England, as an embodiment and example how genocide changed the life of Armenians. Khederian's whole family was burned. Only she was saved because all the corpses fell on her, burning only her left arm. Later, she was taken to an orphanage and then adopted by a British family in Jerusalem. In England, she prepared hand-woven tablecloths, sold them and donated the money to charities. After the earthquake of 1988, she began to save her money and donated \$50,000 to the children of Armenia. When she received an Armenian Passport for her



From left to right, Sam Agulian, Fr. Rafael Andonian, Fr. Dajad Davidian, Fr. Antranik Baljian, State Sen. Warren Tolman and Fr. Arsen Barsamian.

brothers who perished in the Genocide." Tchilingirian is currently a Ph.D. candidate in Sociology at the London School of Economics and is doing research on the new social order in Karabagh.

Running for the seat vacated by Joe Kennedy in the US Congress, John O'Connor, who is the husband of Carolyn Mugar, spoke about his numerous visits to Armenia, especially in the severe winter of 1993. He thanked the Armenian people for making him understand his own heritage and promised to do his best in Washington to convince the government to recognize the Genocide.

the specially arranged three-colored flowers in front of the monument.

In the serenity of a beautiful and ceremonial night, the public listened the music of "Der Getso" and "Cilicia" played on trumpet by Dan Teager and the reading of the poem "Armenian



English and led the audience in singing the American national anthem. The St. James Junior choir then sang the Armenian national anthem.

The keynote speaker, historian Suzanne E. Moranian, presented the historical facts and documents of the Armenian Genocide and explained how the then-Ottoman rulers have eluded the facts in order to cover their atrocities. She emphasized also how the Turkish government is denying the historical facts. Dr. Moranian is a research associate at Wellesley College and has published numerous articles and given talks about all aspects of the Genocide.

Former State Sen. George Bachrach spoke



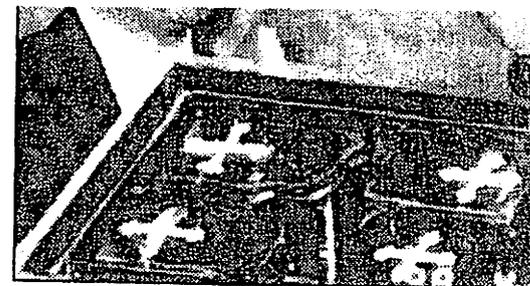
Solpi Salibian

efforts, she was relieved and said, "Now I feel as an Armenian, when I know that my country will flourish and will remember my parents and

Tolman, who for the past eight years hosted the Genocide Commemorations at the Massachusetts State House Chamber, was honored by the community. Reverend Fathers Sam Agulian, Rafael Andonian, Antranik Baljian, Arsen Barsamian and Dajad Davidian all greeted him on the stage and handed him a memorial plaque. Tolman, who is a candidate for lieutenant governor, promised to pursue the recognition of the Genocide by the legislators and government officials.

Conductor Arthur Veranian then led the St. James Junior's Chorus and presented "Zartir Lao" and "Sardarabad."

At the end, the audience proceeded to the Martyrs' Monument with candles and located



Hrach Tchilingirian

Eyes" by Julieta of Armenia.

Finally, the clergy blessed the monument and the souls of the Genocide victims. The public was uplifted by this moving ceremony in memory of the Genocide victims.

## April 24 Panel Tackles Politics, History

BOSTON, MA – The Politics of the Armenian Cause, a panel discussion sponsored by the Armenian National Committee of Eastern Massachusetts, drew a large crowd to the Armenian Cultural and Education Center (ACEC) on Friday evening, April 24. The program was moderated by Professor James Russell, chairman of the Armenian Studies program at Harvard University, and featured State Sen. Warren Tolman; Aram Hamparian, executive director of the Armenian National Committee of America (ANC); Ross Vartian, executive director of the Armenian Assembly of America; and Professor Peter Balakian, author of the *Black Dog of Fate*.

Tolman described state politics and the Armenian Genocide. He listed important points in getting the message out about the Genocide: enfranchising our people; educating elected officials, especially local leaders, early on; supporting resolutions on Beacon Hill; sending cards to Vice President Al Gore to support resolutions; letting the media know about the Genocide and inviting them to events; supporting the curriculum bill to support learning about specific genocides, including the Jewish Holocaust, the Irish Great Hunger, and the Armenian Genocide. Rep. Steve Tolman (Warren's brother) helped write this bill. By a vote of 12-5, the Education Committee is in support of the bill.

Hamparian and Vartian spoke about the Armenian lobby in Washington. Hamparian spoke about public issues and said, "Genocide is a political issue until the Armenian nation has justice for its martyrs. The Armenian Genocide will serve as a foreign policy issue." He said that in California a resolution was passed to resist Turkish influences at American universities. "We face tremendous odds. Armenians care so deeply. It's quite an

By Nancy Kalajian

Special to the Armenian Mirror-Spectator

faith that they can make a difference. If there's one message, it's 'your work does make a difference.'"

Vartian said that "the only thing the Armenian lobby needs is human and financial resources. Everything is doable." He offered an explanation of what the Armenian lobby is and said they are committed to remembering the past and having solidarity with people from Artsakh. He said that the Armenian National Institute (ANI) will have a museum in the future. Recently, President Clinton was reminded to use the word "genocide" but didn't, as he promised to do when he ran for office. Vartian gave Peter Balakian credit as a force behind the *New York Times* ad that appeared on April 24. The Armenian Assembly is now working to force Turkish banks to list Armenian names on unclaimed accounts. Vartian stressed that the Armenian lobby must become exponentially strong. "David defeated Goliath. The Armenian lobby is prepared to defeat Goliath," Vartian said.

In his introduction to educator and author Balakian, Russell said there are three "essential" Armenian Genocide books in English: *Forty Days of Musa Dagh* (Werfel), *The Smyrna Affair* (Hovsepian), and *Black Dog of Fate*.

Balakian, an eloquent speaker, said that "Armenian culture has never been so vital and powerful." Baby-boomer authors – like himself, Nancy Krikorian, Mark Arax and other – represent a

has discourse on the Genocide been so powerful. Americans are hungry to know about the Genocide – the first human rights tragedy of this century. This is a great moment of dynamism."

Balakian spoke of the importance of teamwork, as evidenced by the 175 mainly non-Armenian scholars who signed a petition relating to the Armenian Genocide. "We need to connect on our moral turfs," Balakian said. "All dimensions of Turkish denial are transparent and self-destructive for perpetrators. We need to take it to the mainstream, building a discourse is what it's about. A well-organized network of good press releases would work immensely."

In describing the three days it took to fax and activate the *LA Times* regarding the Turks buying chairs at UCLA, he said, "Discourses are built with texts." While the Jewish people have built discourse on Scripture, Armenians could give lots of money to get translations of historical and religious books, and build such discourse, he said.

During the lively and lengthy question-and-answer period, topics ranged from the Turkish chair at Harvard to a potential statue on the Armenian Genocide on Boston's famed Freedom Trail.

Russell, a member of the Jerusalem-Yerevan Alliance, mentioned the Cambodians, Native-Americans and other peoples who have been massacred. "We are all in the same boat. We have to work together," he said.

Balakian said Bernard Lewis was denied a lifetime achievement award because of his stand on the Armenian Genocide. Fielding another question, Balakian said that Turkey is locked in a "xenophobic" mode. "While we are enraged, we need discourse, to build a big ship and float it."

Later, the author signed copies of *Black Dog of Fate*, which sold out quickly. People stood in long lines to speak with the author.