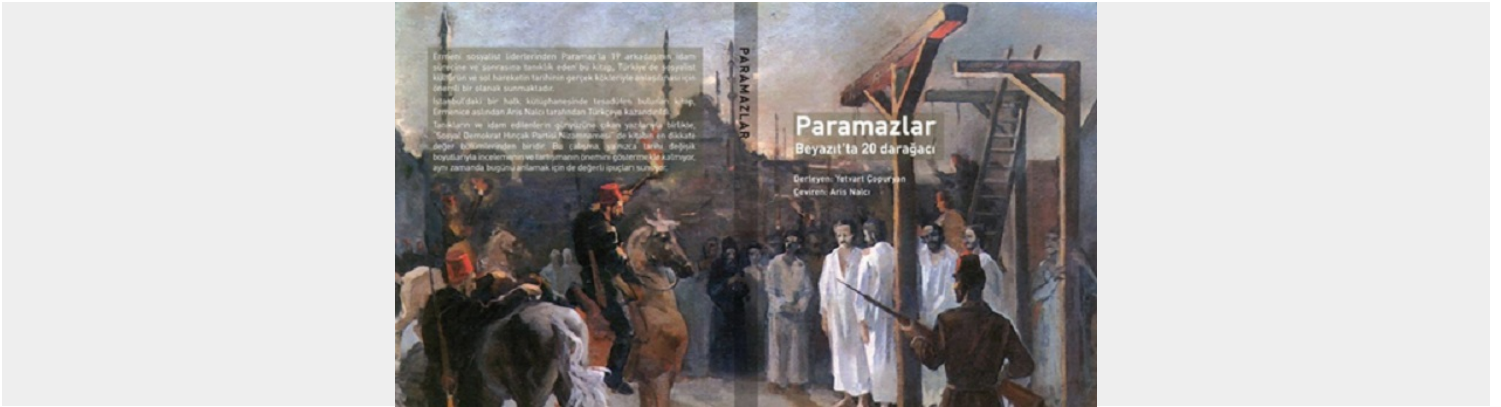


QUEST FOR PEACE AND JUSTICE

Posted on December 24, 2021 by Keghart

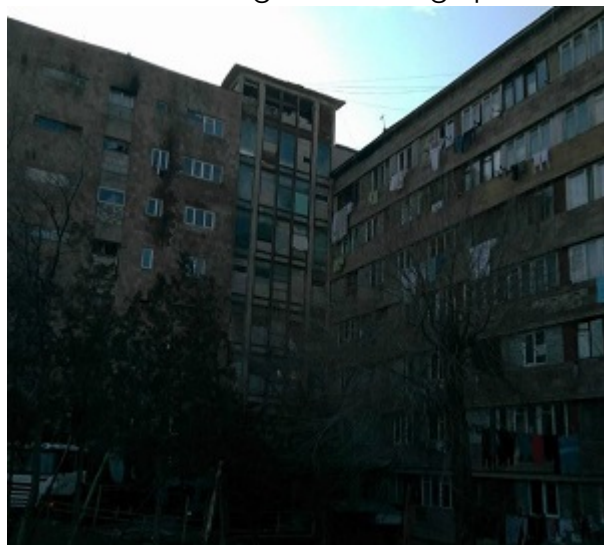


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By Dikran Abrahamian MD, Ontario, 22 December 2021

In the '70s hundreds of Diaspora students were housed in the first of a complex of eight buildings designated as dormitory in Zeitoun, an outskirt of Yerevan behind the "Mayr Hayastan" (Victory) monument. The young girls and boys who studied at various institutions of higher learning spent five to six years in this edifice of six floors until their graduation. Yerevan State University students had their own housing unit in the centre of Yerevan. Upon returning home countries, some of the students became involved in the cultural and political life of their communities.



The occupant of one of the rooms on the fourth floor distinguished himself by hosting frequent gatherings of budding artists who were yet to graduate from the "Yerevani Bedagan Kegharvesda-taderagan Institute", which loosely translates into State Institute of Arts and Drama of Yerevan. In 1994 it got a new name: State Institute for Dramatic Arts and Cinematography of Yerevan. The host was a tall, always smiling young man, a fast talker with a commanding voice. Friends called him Varouj, instead of his full name Daniel Varoujan. Very few called him by his last name—Hejinian--and only on official occasions.

During his graduation year, the gatherings at Varouj's room became more frequent and louder. But



the his) parties did not distract him from preparing his thesis. He spent the summer of 1998 in the United States, where he was following long deliberations, he decided to illustrate "The Twenty Gallows" (Քսան Կախաղանները). Years later, Varoujan wrote: "The idea for this gigantic work came to my mind from my early school years, when annually on June 15th, all the pupils would gather in the yard of *Giligian Varjarian* (an Armenian community school in Aleppo, Syria) to evoke the memory of the twenty martyrs and listen to the powerful patriotic speech of the schoolmaster."

A few of us, who were close to Varoujan and were aware of what he was planning for his thesis, doubted whether the examining board would approve his theme. We thought it was too radical for the times to depict the hanging of Hunchag revolutionaries. We were wrong. That incident hinted that the attitude of Soviet Armenia's governing elite towards Armenian national revolutionary

struggle of a past had changed. Indeed, around the same time several volumes about Armenian traditional parties were published, though heavily shrouded in Marxist phraseology.



Fast forward: in 2015, on the 100th anniversary commemoration of the Genocide in Turkey, the painting was adopted as the cover of "Paramazlar. Twenty executions of Bayazit". It was a study on the execution of Armenian socialist leader Paramaz (1863-1915) and 19 of his friends.

Following graduation, Daniel Varoujan Hejinian immigrated to the United States, settling in Massachusetts. He has had a productive career: he is known worldwide and has received several international and national awards.

Since his student days, Varoujan has shown social activism through his art. The billboards he created, the non-profit organization "[Peace of Art, Inc](#)" he established and the design of "A Mother's Hands" for a Genocide memorial are testimonies of his quest for universal peace and justice.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wYfeLPihRsQ>



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