

TEAS

M A G A Z I N E



Culture | Public Affairs | Business



(Photo: Jean-Christophe Hanché)

ELCHIN SHIRINOV – A UNIQUE TAKE ON AZERBAIJANI ETHNOJAZZ

Also in this issue:

Trans-Adriatic Pipeline (TAP) construction begins
Welcome to H.E. Carole Crofts – new UK Ambassador to Azerbaijan
Business, culture and music to the fore in Reims
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Rafiq Rustamov – the tar legend reflects

06 / 2016
www.teas.eu

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Welcome to the TEAS Magazine

The European Azerbaijan Society (TEAS) is a UK-registered pan-European foundation dedicated to raising awareness of Azerbaijan and fostering closer economic, political and cultural links between that country and the nations of Europe.

As well as promoting the positive aspects of Azerbaijan, TEAS also highlights the plight of the 875,000 refugees and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) within the country. These people are unable to return to their homes and lands because of the illegal occupation of Nagorno-Karabakh and seven surrounding districts by Armenia's armed forces – in defiance of four UN Security Council resolutions.

TEAS has three main facets to its operations:

- Culture – TEAS raises awareness of Azerbaijan's rich and vibrant culture to a worldwide audience by organising cultural events and operating as a networking centre.
- Business – TEAS supports its membership of European and Azerbaijani businesses. It provides a platform for organisations to establish links and strengthen their existing business relationships via a programme of networking opportunities across the regions.
- Public Affairs – TEAS works to increase awareness about Azerbaijan amongst key opinion-formers, key decision-makers and other political, academic and civil society stakeholders.

In pursuit of its objectives TEAS:

- Organises meetings with interested parties, opinion-formers and decision-makers
- Arranges roundtables, seminars, lectures and conferences
- Publishes pamphlets, reports, bulletins, books and produces films
- Facilitates fact-finding trips by politicians and business people.

Win £100 of Amazon vouchers!

Firstly, congratulations to Asli Samadova, who won the May competition.

To stand a chance of winning £100 of Amazon vouchers, simply answer the following 10 questions, the answers to which will be found in this issue of the magazine. In the case of a tie, a draw will be made. Previous winners are ineligible to enter, as are TEAS employees and their families. Please send all entries to editor@teas.eu by 17.00hrs (GMT) on 4 July.

1. Who is the Head of the EU Delegation to Azerbaijan?
2. Which company developed the first e-guide to Azerbaijan?
3. Who is the Secretary-General of NATO?
4. Who was the drummer for the Elchin Shirinov Trio who performed in Reims and Paris?
5. Where was tar player Rafiq Rustamov born?
6. How many strings does the Azerbaijani tar have?
7. Who developed the Azerbaijani tar?
8. With which Tunisian musician and composer is Isfar Sarabski touring Europe?
9. Who is the representative of the Confederation of Entrepreneurs of the Azerbaijani Republic (ASK) in France?
10. Who organised the debate on Nagorno-Karabakh in Paris on 24 June?

Upcoming Events For full details of all TEAS events, go to [www.teas.eu/upcoming events](http://www.teas.eu/upcoming%20events)

13 July: Elchin Shirinov Trio (London)

The Spice of Life, 6 Moor Street, London, W1D 5NA (two sets). Featuring Andrea Di Biase (bass) and Jon Scott (drums). 21.30hrs. (follows Alex Munk's Flying Machines at 20hrs) Tickets: £10/8. Call +44 (0)20 74373013; <http://www.wegottickets.com/event/365348>

15 July: Elchin Shirinov Trio (London)

Vortex Jazz Club, 11 Gillett Square, London, N16 8AZ. Featuring Andrea Di Biase (bass) and Dave Hamblett (drums). 20.30hrs. Tickets: £12. Call +44 (0)20 7254 4097; <https://vortex.eventcube.io/events/4226/elchin-shirinov-trio/>

18 November: Elchin Shirinov Trio (part of the London Jazz Festival)

Pizza Express Jazz Club, 10 Dean Street, London W1D 3RW. Featuring Andrea Di Biase (bass) and Dave Hamblett (drums). 13.00hrs. Call +44 (0)20 74394962

TEAS is pleased to support performances by the outstanding Azerbaijani pianist Elchin Shirinov in three of the leading London jazz venues. Seamlessly blending pianistic pyrotechnics and mugham into an intoxicating aural ethnojazz experience, these gigs come on the tail of successful performances in Reims and at the Festival Jazz à Saint-Germain-des-Prés Paris (see p.6).

Facebook

The TEAS Facebook page is your chance to learn about the latest news, events, campaigns and other Azerbaijan-related items. Visit and 'like' our page at: <http://bit.ly/TEASFB>.

Membership and Sponsorship

TEAS offers a range of corporate and individual membership packages, providing such benefits as advertising, trade missions, networking, business sector advice and hotel discounts.

TEAS also offers numerous sponsorship opportunities throughout the year for its events and conferences. To find out more, e-mail: membership@teas.eu.



Lionel Zetter,
Director,
TEAS

From the TEAS Director

There have been significant repercussions of the decision by the German Bundestag to recognise the events in 1915 regarding Armenia as 'genocide'. Not only was the Turkish Ambassador to Berlin withdrawn, but Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev cancelled a series of important meetings with high-level German politicians and officials.

Meanwhile, a new visa regime is coming into force that enables an Azerbaijani visa to be obtained within three days. H.E. Carole Crofts, the new UK Ambassador to Azerbaijan, has presented her credentials and had one-on-one talks with Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev.

Two former French Ambassadors – one to Azerbaijan and one to Armenia – have criticised the role of the Armenian diaspora in keeping what they term a 'sleeping conflict' alive.

On the cultural front, TEAS France has arranged for the participation of Azerbaijani jazz pianist Elchin Shirinov at the Sunnyside Festival in Reims and at the Festival Jazz a Saint-Germain-des-Pres in Paris. This month we interview Rafiq Rustamov, a tar player born near the totemic town of Khojaly.

On the business side, the EBRD has approved its first-ever loans to Azerbaijan. In another historic development, construction has begun on the vital Trans-Adriatic Pipeline (TAP), the final phase of the Southern Energy Corridor. This will bring gas from the Caspian Sea to Italy, and from there in to the rest of Europe, thereby increasing the relevance of Azerbaijan to the EU to an even greater extent.

Lionel Zetter, Director, TEAS



German Chancellor Angela Merkel pledged the support of her country towards peaceful conflict resolution during its OSCE Presidency

Chancellor Merkel and President Aliyev stand together for resolution

German Chancellor Angela Merkel has stood alongside Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev in Berlin to call for swift resolution of the Armenian–Azerbaijani conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh. During her statement, Mrs Merkel pledged her support throughout the German Presidency of the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). Stating that Germany would like to play its part, she said that peaceful resolution is not solely a question of respecting the ceasefire, but of making progress with the political process.

Mrs Merkel made particular reference to

the OSCE Minsk Group, Co-Chaired by France, Russia and the US, stating: "We will be working to ensure that all member states of the OSCE Minsk Group meet, rather than solely the Co-Chairs." She stated that Germany remains a member of the Group, and reflected that the current situation remains unfavourable, as the conflict could flare up again at any time. Mrs Merkel voiced the opinion that Russia would play a crucial part in resolving the conflict, and Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev explained: "Recent developments in the region on the 'contact line' show the ceasefire is not stable; it is fragile."

FCO advises against all travel to Nagorno-Karabakh

The UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) has advised against all travel to the Armenian-occupied Azerbaijani regions of Nagorno-Karabakh and the seven surrounding regions, having updated its advice in advance of the inaugural Grand Prix of Europe Formula 1 race in Baku.

The statement goes on to read: "Anyone who has visited Nagorno-Karabakh without the permission of the Azerbaijani authorities will be refused entry to Azerbaijan." Around 7000 UK nationals per annum visit Azerbaijan.

Online visa to Azerbaijan in three days

As part of the drive to increase tourism in Azerbaijan, foreign visitors will soon be able to obtain their visas in a mere three days using the ASAN Visa system. Inam Karimov, Chairman, Azerbaijani State Agency for Public Service and Social Innovations under the Azerbaijani President, commented: "Foreign citizens, including tourists, can use the services of the ASAN Visa portal so they may travel to Azerbaijan. Visas will be issued online within three days without applying to state organisations."

He stated that the Azerbaijani Foreign

Ministry would approve the list of countries that will be able to receive e-visas, and that the innovation will be implemented during the next few months.

The move follows the ratification of the e-visa issuance procedure by Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev on 1 June. This decree was signed in order to simplify the procedure for issuing visas to foreigners arriving in Azerbaijan, together with ensuring transparency and efficiency via the application of modern information technologies.

Mard: Azerbaijani–EU partnership to be expanded

Speaking to *Trend News*, Malena Mard, Head, EU delegation to Azerbaijan, stated that Azerbaijan and the EU are working across every sphere to expand their partnership. She commented: “EU representatives are expected to visit Azerbaijan in connection with energy projects in autumn 2016. Moreover, a political level visit will be paid in the coming months.” She also stressed that Azerbaijani–EU consultations on a new strategic agreement are ongoing, saying: “The new agreement will cover all areas of co-operation, so the consultations are lengthy.” Since early 2016, Azerbaijani–EU trade turnover has reached \$2bn (£1.4bn).



Malena Mard, Head, EU delegation to Azerbaijan, looked forward to the result of the new Azerbaijani–EU strategic agreement

Order on Azerbaijani-French University project ratified

The Azerbaijani Cabinet of Ministers has been instructed to determine the number of students who will study at the Azerbaijani–French University. This follows the signing of an order on the project.

According to the order, those Azerbaijani higher educational institutions involved in the concept will admit students following an entrance examination. Furthermore, they will have the right to jointly manage the educational programmes of French higher education institutions in the country.

One Azerbaijani dead in Istanbul explosion

According to the *TRT Haber* news channel, one Azerbaijani citizen was killed on 7 June by the terrorist explosion in Istanbul. The attack resulted in the deaths of 11 people and injured 36 more.

First international e-guide to Azerbaijan

The Azerbaijani web developer Technimum has reported that its new e-guide app will not solely cover Central Baku, but the whole of Azerbaijan. The e-guide – soon to be available at robiguide.com – will provide detailed information for all tourists, including audio commentaries on all historical monuments, buildings, restaurants, entertainment centres, offices and other facilities. Information will be provided in Azerbaijani, Russian and English.

At the current stage, the application is available for the Android operating system, and in future will also be available for users of iOS and Windows Phone. In a statement, Technimum continued: “In the future, we plan to expand the scope of the project outside the country, and relevant negotiations are underway with Turkey, Georgia and Kazakhstan.”

Iranian President Rouhani to visit Baku

The forthcoming visit of Iranian President Hassan Rouhani to Baku is expected to boost the level of Iranian–Azerbaijani co-operation, according to a senior Iranian official when quizzed by the *Trend* news agency.

Speaking in Baku on the sidelines of the *Seventh Global Forum of the UN Alliance of Civilisations*, Massoud Soltanifar, Iranian Vice-President and Head of the Cultural Heritage Organisation, said that President

Hassan Rouhani would visit Baku before the end of June, coming in the wake of the six presidential meetings over the past two years that have resulted in the ratification of over 40 bilateral agreements. They last met in Tehran in late February, where more than 10 documents were signed. Elaborating on the spheres for further potential co-operation, Mr Soltanifar said that several projects across a range of sectors, from industry and science to tourism, would be under consideration.



Iranian President Hassan Rouhani is set to visit Baku to discuss the further development of economic relations

New UK Ambassador begins her tenure

Speaking in a video address on the *UK in Azerbaijan* Facebook page at www.facebook.com/ukinazerbaijan, H.E. Carole Crofts, the newly-appointed UK Ambassador to Azerbaijan, stated that the two countries had enjoyed close bilateral

ties for nearly 25 years. Speaking in Azerbaijani, she continued: “We have achieved a great deal of success during this period and have strong ties that continue to develop. I attach great importance to sustainable development

and mutually beneficial relations. Based on the success of previous ambassadors, I am looking forward to working with the Azerbaijani people to achieve a prosperous, stable and secure future for both countries.”

Foreign Minister meets NATO chief

Elmar Mammadyarov, Azerbaijani Foreign Minister, met Jens Stoltenberg, Secretary-General, NATO, during his visit to Brussels. During the meeting, the sides expressed satisfaction with the development of Azerbaijani–NATO co-operation, highlighting its active participation in the NATO Individual Partnership Action Plan (IPAP), Planning and Review Process (PARP) and the Operational Capabilities Concept (OCC).

The sides also underlined the Azerbaijani contribution towards the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and Resolute Support missions, aimed at ensuring peace and security, noting that Azerbaijan provides transit opportunities for NATO forces in Afghanistan.

Mr Mammadyarov commented that

Azerbaijani–Afghan bilateral relations stand at the highest level, as indicated by the visit to Azerbaijan of Mohammad Hanif Atmar, Secretary, Afghan National Security Council. It was noted that the inauguration of the Baku–Tbilisi–Kars railway would increase access to regional transport infrastructure in Afghanistan. Furthermore, the current and future role of Azerbaijan in ensuring pan-European energy security, following the construction of the Southern Energy Corridor, was highlighted.

Making reference to the ongoing attempts to peacefully resolve the Armenian–Azerbaijani conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh, Mr Mammadyarov stated that collaboration between Azerbaijan, Armenia and the OSCE Minsk Group had recommenced, with an important Summit 3+2 being held in Vienna on 16 May. He explained that the OSCE Minsk Group



During the meeting, Elmar Mammadyarov, Azerbaijani Foreign Minister (left), pledged to continue high-level co-operation with NATO, particularly regarding the campaign in Afghanistan

Co-Chairs and international community consider the status quo to be unreliable, unstable and unacceptable, and that a change to this would only be possible following the withdrawal of Armenian troops from the occupied territories. The sides also exchanged views on the prospects for further development of the Azerbaijani–NATO relationship.

Azerbaijani President Aliyev meets Munich Security Conference Chairman

Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev met Wolfgang Friedrich Ischinger, Chairman, Munich Security Conference in Berlin, hailing the excellent level of co-operation and active involvement between Azerbaijan and the Conference. The contribution of

the country towards ensuring global security was highlighted during the meeting, as was the recent upsurge of violence on the ‘contact line’ between Azerbaijan and the Armenian-occupied territories.

French MP Mancel recognises Azerbaijani tolerance

Jean-François Mancel, Member of the French National Assembly and President, Association of Friends of Azerbaijan in the National Assembly, has acknowledged that Azerbaijan represents a beacon of tolerance for the whole world. Speaking on the sidelines of the *Seventh Global Forum of the UN Alliance of Civilisations (UNAOC)*, he told the *Trend* news agency: “Unfortunately, nowadays, there are transnational, interethnic and interreligious conflicts in various regions of the world. Holding this Global Forum is of crucial importance, as undertaking an event of such a scale under the current conditions in Azerbaijan is a shining exemplar that the international community considers Baku to be the centre of tolerance. I don’t know of any other country where people of different nationalities and religions could peacefully coexist for centuries.”

Mr Mancel continued: “The realities of Azerbaijan must be brought to the attention of the international community, and that’s the purpose of the Association headed by myself. All our efforts are aimed at promoting Azerbaijan in France, and we still have much to do in this direction. Azerbaijan and France have a lot in common – both countries cherish their independence. Azerbaijan is a unique country, known internationally for

its tolerance and peaceful nature. These qualities are of particular importance in today’s world.”

As 2016 is the *Year of Multiculturalism* in Azerbaijan, Baku was the ideal host city for the *UNAOC Global Forum*, which was attended by over 2500 guests from 120 countries, including UN member states, political leaders, representatives from private business and media, and academicians. The forum culminated with the unanimous adoption of the Baku Declaration by the Group of Friends of the UN Alliance of Civilisations.

According to UN Radio, the declaration is a political document that will guide future efforts towards achieving the goals of UNAOC, which has been mandated to promote harmony among nations. The Baku Declaration calls for implementation of its commitments so that governments, with the support of civil society, can overcome challenges and move forward towards the goals of living together in inclusive societies to achieve sustainable development.

Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, High Representative, UNAOC, commented: “Through the Baku Declaration, the Group of Friends reaffirmed its support

for UNAOC and expressed its conviction that UNAOC plays an important role as a global platform for sharing good practice, enabling all to live together in inclusive societies.” Maltese President Marie-Louise Coleiro Preca commented that, in order to achieve progress in the world, all peoples should live in solidarity, saying: “People are concerned about growing inequalities. Fear is sowing the seeds of discord. We should keep social inclusion in our hands as a flag. The Baku Declaration will promote the principles of justice and equality.” Azerbaijan is currently one of the few countries to hold membership of the Organisation of Islamic Co-operation (OIC) and the Council of Europe.



Jean-François Mancel, President, Association of Friends of Azerbaijan in the French National Assembly, warmly recalled the tolerance and multinationalism of Azerbaijan

Azerbaijani spirit comes to the Festival Jazz à Saint-Germain-des-Prés Paris

Internationally acclaimed Azerbaijani pianist Elchin Shirinov brought his unique approach to ethnojazz to the Festival Jazz à Saint-Germain-des-Prés Paris – one of the leading European jazz festivals – on 27 May. His trio performed in front of over 200 Parisian music aficionados, critics and H.E. Elchin Amirbayov, Azerbaijani Ambassador to France. TEAS France sponsored the involvement of the trio, which came in the wake of the participation by Azerbaijani artists in two previous editions of the festival.

Frédéric Charbaut, Jazz Broadcaster and Co-founder of the Festival, opened the evening saying: “This is the third successive year that I have the pleasure to introduce a band led by an Azerbaijani musician. In previous editions of the festival, the support of TEAS has enabled audiences to hear some excellent bands led by Azerbaijani musicians, the first of which was the Isfar Sarabski Trio. This leader has now become internationally famous. Last year we saw the participation of Emil Afrasiyab and his Quartet. I am now fortunate to introduce Elchin Shirinov, a new pianist for the festival.”

Shirinov – who comes from the Azerbaijani folk tradition – belongs to the new generation of Azerbaijani jazz musicians who combine elements of post-bop jazz, blues and funk with the modes, melodies and microtones of Azerbaijani folk and classical music. Although fundamentally different to jazz, mugham – the national music of Azerbaijan – is notable for a high level of improvisation. Throughout, Shirinov’s mellifluous extemporisations and pianistic pyrotechnics entranced the jazz cognoscenti in the crowd, particularly in his variations around the folksong *Gul Achdi*. He went on to give a very individual interpretation of *Sari Gelin* and *Durna*, two of the most popular Azerbaijani folksongs; and included his reflective self-penned compositions *Waiting* and *Muse* in his set, many of which featured the sound of the Melodica, a wind-operated keyboard that makes an accordion-like sound, which he balanced on top of the grand piano.



The spirited interplay between Elchin Shirinov and Linley Marthe encapsulated the essence of two musicians who have reached the top of their game

Shirinov has formerly played with Rain Sultanov, who remains one of the foremost Azerbaijani tenor saxophonists, and has also performed alongside many of the visiting international jazz musicians participating in the annual Baku International Jazz Festival. This multifarious experience has stood him in good

Narimanbekova named as the best artist in France

The famous Paris-based Azerbaijani artist Nigar Narimanbekova, has been given the prestigious *Toile D’Or (Golden Canvas) Award* by the Fédération Nationale de la Culture Française. She commented: “During the great art exhibition, *Art en Capital 2015*, which is traditionally held in the main exhibition hall of the Grand Palais in Paris, my painting *Adagio* received the main prize. I am delighted to receive the title, as I represent my native land of Azerbaijan.”



Azerbaijani pianist Elchin Shirinov transfixed over 200 Parisian jazzophiles with his captivating mélange of Azerbaijani folk music, post-bop jazz, blues and funk, alongside Linley Marthe (electric bass) and Eric Harland (drums)

stead, and the evening saw him team up with Mauritian bassist Linley Marthe, who previously played with fusion pioneer and Weather Report group founder Joe Zawinul, and the inspired American drummer Eric Harland, who has played with the free jazz figurehead Charles Lloyd.

The rapturous response bore testament to American pianist Brad Mehldau’s testimonial: “Elchin has a really good sense of how to orchestrate for the trio setting. In particular, he finds a distinct place for the piano and the bass in the music – he doesn’t play any extraneous stuff that the bass is already doing.” Harland’s polyrhythmic drumming technique clearly excited the audience, and he revelled in the chance to play in different metres due to the variable and unusual time signatures in Azerbaijani music. The interplay between the men was most intuitive and Harland demonstrated great sensitivity, unleashing his musical power whenever relevant.

The set by the Elchin Shirinov Trio was followed by a fusion set by leading French clarinetist Michel Portal, American drummer Jeff Ballard and American bass exponent Kevin Hays, who has given Shirinov tuition and guidance over the past few years. This combined free and fusion jazz and classical nuances to hypnotic effect.

The Elchin Shirinov Trio also gave a successful concert on 26 May in Reims at the local Sunnyside Festival. He will perform in London at the Spice of Life on 13 July (www.spiceoflifesofo.com); the Vortex on 15 July (www.vortexjazz.co.uk); and at the Pizza Express Jazz Club on 18 November (as part of the *London Jazz Festival*)(see p.2). Go to www.elchinshirinov.com to experience the innovative work of Elchin Shirinov.



The enthusiasm of the audience buoyed the musicians as they plumbed the depths of musical discovery and inspiration

Sarabski around Europe

Isfar Sarabski, the world-famous Azerbaijani pianist and composer, winner of multiple prestigious awards, including the Solo Piano Prize at the Montreux Jazz Festival, will give concerts alongside Dhafer Youssef, the Tunisian composer, singer and oud player, across Europe. His tour will take in gigs in Udine, Italy (23 June); Romania (2 July); Portugal (16 July); the Malaga Jazz Festival, Spain (29 July); and Württemberg, Germany (4 August).

Isfar began playing the piano at the age of seven years. He initially studied classical piano for 11 years at the Bulbul Music School, thereafter continuing his education at the Baku Music Academy, from which he graduated as a classical pianist in 2011. The same year, he received a scholarship from the Berklee College of Music. To date, he has performed at the Baku International Jazz Festival several times, participated in the annual Sildajazz Festival in Norway, and the International Jazz Festival in Russia, amongst others.



Isfar Sarabski (piano) and Dhafer Youssef (oud), alongside other musicians, during their acclaimed concert at the Théâtre du Châtelet in Paris

Passion for tea highlighted on Euronews



The importance of cay tea, an indelible element of Azerbaijani life, was explored during the report that has a potential viewership of 350m households in 155 countries

The latest instalment in the Euronews *Postcards from Azerbaijan* series has focused on the deep attachment of the country for tea, which dates back for centuries. In the piece, reporter Seamus Keaney travels to Lankaran, where most Azerbaijani tea plantations are to be found. He explains: "It's the first picking of the season here on the local plantations, which lie between the Caspian Sea and the mountains, and where the subtropical climate and humidity are just right for growing tea. The leaves grown here are for domestic consumption, but they are also exported."

"There are traditional tea houses all over Azerbaijan, where locals have a saying that 'when you drink tea, you don't count the cups'. Azerbaijanis also pride themselves on the quality of their locally grown tea, saying it contains many health benefits." Go to <http://bit.ly/postcardtea> to see the full report. Ilgar Azimov, Lankaran Tourism Information Centre told *Postcards*: "There are a lot of minerals and vitamins in the leaves, and Lankaran tea is very good for the health of everybody."

Multiculturalism around the world – the competition

The Azerbaijani International Multicultural Network is organising the *Multiculturalism around the World: Photo and Poster Contest 2016*. This is open to all participants, both professional and amateur, regardless of age, gender or nationality. The competition for either posters or photographs reflects the aims and objectives of the 2016 *Year of Multiculturalism*, and entries should relate to the idea of multiculturalism and embracing diversity.

The deadline for entries is 5 October, and photos should be JPEG images at maximum quality with approximate resolution of 2048×2048 pixels, taken from any camera – either film (scanned) or digital. The maximum poster file size is 10MB, and the file type should be JPEG, PNG or PDF.

Words, text, and IMN logos can be added to the photo or poster submission, provided they are relevant to the aim of the contest. Entries must portray a positive theme and be submitted electronically in accordance with and subject to the contest rules. Entrants should submit entries with their name, age and location where the photo was taken, together with a title for the artwork to multiculturalnetwork2016@gmail.com. Prizes range from \$300–500 (£210–£350) and all entries will be published in a book of submissions.

The themes are:

1. The Multicultural Spirit of Azerbaijan
2. Multiculturalism and Technology
3. Multicultural Youth or Youth and Multiculturalism
4. Multiculturalism In Music
5. Women's Issues and Multiculturalism
6. Celebrating Multiculturalism
7. Multicultural Workforce
8. Multicultural Education
9. The Multivisions of Multiculturalism
10. Religion and Conflicts: The Future of Multiculturalism
11. Azerbaijani Model of Multiculturalism
12. Children and Culture
13. My Philosophy of Multiculturalism.
14. Ethical Issues in Multicultural Society

The judging panel will comprise two international experts on multiculturalism issues, two international assistant professors in photography, and three international art consultants and advisors.

Rafiq Rustamov – keeping the tar alive and relevant

Rafiq Rustamov (born in 1945) is one of the foremost living exponents of the Azerbaijani tar. Born near Khojaly – scene of the massacre in 1992 that claimed the lives of 613 civilians and is still under Armenian occupation – he received instruction on his instrument from some of the most renowned mugham masters of the 20th century. He first came to prominence when he won the Gold Medal at the 1969 Soviet Music Festival. He has brought the essence of Azerbaijani mugham to many countries, including France, Switzerland, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Mr Rustamov is also a great educator, and was Director of the Khan Shushinsky Mugham School and Founder and Director of the Qarabag Bulbulleri (Nightingales of Karabakh) Ensemble until his retirement last year. After his appearances at the Khojaly Commemoration Concert in London and in the Azerbaijani Cultural Pavilion at the Royal Windsor Horse Show, Neil Watson caught up with Rafiq to find out more:

You were born near Khojaly, in what is now Armenian-occupied Nagorno-Karabakh. Can you describe the artistic milieu of this area during your childhood?

I was born and raised in Aghdam, a town near Khojaly, which nestles in the foothills of the Caucasus Mountains. It has a picturesque landscape, extremely fresh air and was an all-Azerbaijani town at the time. The people who lived there prior to the massacre were sincere, full of life, hospitable and very hard-working. Khojaly was a beautiful town before the Armenian occupation. As a town, it developed on a daily basis. The only airport in the region was in Khojaly, which we would use quite often. A river flowed near Khojaly, and we used to fish there when we were children. This how I remember Khojaly.

What led you to select the tar as your chosen instrument? Did you come from a musical household?

I used to sing at concerts and music competitions from the age of 12. My father, Rahim Rustamli, was a poet. When he entered me into the Aghdam Children's Music School, he said: "Rafiq, if you learn to play tar well; if you become a good performer, it will give me new inspiration for new poems." My first teacher was Jalal Allahveran oghlu Aliyev, who was an outstanding musician and a great man. It was he who taught me the philosophy of mugham, the mugham modes and meaning of those modes. He also taught me which



ghazal would be most appropriate for each of the mugham modes. Later I was admitted to the Uzeyir Hajibeyli Aghdam Musical College, from which I graduated four years later. Khosrov Farajov, who was the director of the college at the time, employed me as a teacher. He made me the concertmaster for the Shur Ensemble, and I was awarded a Gold Medal during my tenure in that position.

Many aspects of tar and mugham performance are transmitted orally. Which mugham masters provided tuition, and to what extent did they focus on the meditative aspects of the music?

I was taught by Jalal Aliyev (born 1923), a well-known mugham master from Karabakh. He developed a great road map for the music, enabling me to discover the secrets of mugham. Mr Aliyev taught many great names of mugham, including Ramiz Guliyev, Farig Huseynov, and Vagif Abdulgassimov, many of whom are now People's Artists of Azerbaijan and Professors of Music. He would not permit mugham to be modified – stressing that it should only be performed only in a classic manner. He would always say: "There are 15 mughams, seven of which are primary, and eight are secondary. If you think you are so talented, why don't you create a new mugham so that we have 16, 17 or 18 of them? You cannot alter classic mughams!"

What are the main challenges in playing the tar?

The tar must be well-tuned, and the performers should feel free and enjoy playing the instrument.

The Azerbaijani tar has 11 strings and 17 tones, and was developed around 1870 by tar-player Sadigjan. What are the

main differences between the Persian and Azerbaijani forms of the instrument?

The Azerbaijani tar was previously played on the knee of the performer, and had only six strings before the Sadigjan era. Sadigjan added five more strings to the tar, and the playing position was raised from knee to chest height. The Persian tar differs from the Azerbaijani instrument with regard to its timbre, number of strings, sound and the material from which it is made. The Azerbaijani tar is now included on the UNESCO List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

What are the comparative challenges between playing solo tar and performing behind a khanande?

When performing solo, the musician reflects on the tender feelings flowing from inside him. However, when accompanying a khanande, you are following their singing, resonating all the details of their interpretation. You should never jump ahead of the khanande. Singers are usually in a discovery mode, and are normally just following their heart whilst they are performing. They may be using some new pitches and nuances that are spontaneous and they have never previously used. As an accompanying tar player, it is important, in a way, to recapitulate those little details and nuances that the singer may introduce, so they may build their interpretation around that. Accompanying a singer is much more complex than playing solo, and not every solo tar player can accompany a mugham singer.

In your view, which khanande – either past or present – has the finest voice?

In my view, the list of the greatest classic khanandes includes Kechahi oghly Mahammad, Haji Husu, Jabbar Garjaghdhi oghlu, Seyid Shushinski and Khan Shushunski, and the foremost

contemporary khanandes are Arif Babayev, Mansum Ibrahimov, Alim Qasimov and Gazanfar Abbasov.

Did you ever perform any of the concertos for tar and symphony orchestra by Haji Khanmammadov?

I have played the Second and Third Concertos for tar by Haji Khanmammadov, both of which are based on mughams. His knowledge and, most importantly, love of mugham were two pillars of his compositional style.

You first came to prominence when you achieved a Gold Medal at the 1969 Soviet Music Festival. How did your career subsequently develop?

My career took a new boost after the Gold Medal I achieved whilst leading the Shur Ensemble. I was awarded the title of the Honoured Worker of the Cultural Industry of the Azerbaijani Republic. I have been featured in various articles in some 143 newspapers and magazines, together with 15 books. To date, I have been awarded 72 commendations and diplomas, and 10 music trophies, some of which are from overseas. I would also like to say here that I have four children, all of whom were named after mugham modes. My daughter is called Shahnaz, and my three sons are named Rahab, Shushdar and Mahur. Mugham is an integral part of my life, my soul and my blood.

How did you come to found and direct the Khan Shushinsky Mugham School and what has it achieved?

In 1985, a mugham school opened in Aghdam, its construction having been initiated by Sadig Mustuzayev, the First Secretary of the region at that time. It was the only mugham school for children in the Eastern world. I went from door-to-door and village-by-village, including in Khojaly, finding gifted children, and brought them



Born near Khojaly in the Karabakh region – now under Armenian occupation – Rafiq began the *Khojaly Commemoration Concert* in London in a sensitive and plaintive manner

to the school. The most talented child performers were admitted to the school, following a competition. Soon these children became a part of the Qarabag Bulbulleri Ensemble that I organised in the same year. We undertook great concerts at the Philharmonic Hall in Baku in 1987 and 1989. The other tours I organised with the ensemble were:

- 1988: Moscow, Russia – Children’s Charity TV Marathon during Belyayev’s 100th Anniversary
- 1989: Iraq – Babylon Music Festival
- 1990: Istanbul
- 1991: Ankara, Turkey – The Third Children’s Music Festival
- 1991: Dushanbe, Tajikistan – International Music Festival
- 1991: Baku, Azerbaijan – Sadigjan Mugham Festival and the Shah Ismayil Literary Evening
- 1992–93: various concerts on the stage and on Azerbaijani television.

- 2004–06, 2008–09: concerts in various French cities
- 2009: concerts at various locations across Switzerland.
- 2012: Rome, Italy – celebration of 20 years of Italian–Azerbaijani diplomatic relations.

What do you feel can be done to further promote the performance and appreciation of the tar in Azerbaijan and across the world?

In order for the tar to be fully appreciated as a musical instrument in Azerbaijan and internationally, extensive new and rich musical pieces should be written for the tar and symphony orchestra. This music needs to appeal to audiences of all backgrounds with varying tastes, as was the case with the work of composer Uzeyir Hajibeyli. These musical pieces need to be performed by outstanding tar players, and it would also be very helpful to provide the audience with full information on the tar and its musical capabilities.

Following the Armenian invasion and occupation of Aghdam, the Mugham School had to relocate to Barda and moved to Baku a year later. Overseas tours resumed soon after.

Thereafter the following concerts took place:

Go to go to <http://bit.ly/RafiqRustamov> to see an exciting performance by Rafiq Rustamov and the other members of the Qarabag Bulbulleri Ensemble.



Rafiq stands alongside fellow tar-player Elchin Abbasov, Toghrol Asadullayev (kamancha) and Khamiz Jafarov (nagara), having performed a breathtaking set in the Azerbaijani Cultural Pavilion at the Royal Windsor Horse Show

Azerbaijani business, culture and music combine in Reims

The French city of Reims, located 143km from Paris, hosted an event featuring an enthralling mix of Azerbaijani business, culture and music on 26 May. This was hosted by CCI Reims-Eperney, and organised by TEAS France, in partnership with Jazzus Productions, CCI International Champagne-Ardenne and the Azerbaijani Embassy to France. This was also a celebration of Azerbaijani Republic Day – remembering the achievements of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic (ADR), the first democracy in the Muslim East – which existed from 1918–20.

The afternoon began with a roundtable focusing on how cultural co-operation can create economic opportunities as a vehicle for increasing understanding of the country, its tolerance, and westward-facing stance, attended by over 30 company representatives from Reims and its region. Marie-Laetitia Gourdin, Director, TEAS France, explained how the meeting came in the wake of events held in Reims in 2012 when it hosted the now-famous *Azerbaijan – Pearl of the Caucasus* exhibition, opened by Mrs Mehriban Aliyeva, First Lady of Azerbaijan. Last year, TEAS decided to support the creation of a new jazz festival in the city, known as the Sunnyside Festival, founded by Jazzus Productions, and facilitated the participation of Azerbaijani jazz pianist Emil Afrasiyab and his Quartet. The enthusiasm generated by this collaboration provided the groundwork to add cultural and business roundtables to the proceedings.

Mrs Gourdin explained how Azerbaijan is a close partner to the EU, and that the country is officially secular, combining the oriental and European. She outlined how TEAS is contributing towards developing links between French and Azerbaijani



The roundtable was chaired by Marie-Laetitia Gourdin, Director, TEAS France

cities, mentioning examples from Colmar and Mulhouse, where TEAS organised its *Azerbaijan Through the Lens* exhibition and participated in the Christmas Market, which showcased typical Azerbaijani products for French consumers.

Composer Pierre Thilloz spoke of his experiences in Azerbaijan since he began visiting the country regularly as Composer-in-Residence for the French Embassy in Azerbaijan in 2001. He explained how music remains integral to every element of Azerbaijani life and is a key to comprehending the country. Mr Thilloz referred to the great 20th century symphonic tradition of such Azerbaijani composers as Gara Garayev and Fikret Amirov, also showing how music can be harnessed to speak of difficult or challenging subjects.

His sentiments were reflected by Jean Delestrade, Co-Founder of Jazzus Productions, organiser of the Sunnyside Jazz Festival. Looking forward to the concert by the Elchin Shirinov Trio that evening, he commented how the three participations of Azerbaijani jazz musicians in the Festival Jazz à Saint-Germain-des-Prés Paris – organised by TEAS France – and this second participation in the Sunnyside festival were placing Azerbaijan on the map for jazz fans. The Paris festival has previously featured the now-famous Isfar Sarabski and Emil Afrasiyab and now placed Elchin Shirinov in the spotlight. He commented that those musicians from France and other countries who were collaborating with Azerbaijani jazz artistes are now beginning to understand the country through its music.

Ayaz Gojaye, Cultural Counsellor and First Secretary, Azerbaijani Embassy to France, spoke of the cultural work undertaken by the Heydar Aliyev Foundation in France, such as the restoration of five 14th century stained glass windows in Strasbourg Cathedral; contributing to the restoration of several rural churches in the Basse-Normandie region; and in playing an integral role in creating the Islamic art department in the Louvre Museum. He discussed the importance of establishing friendship and co-operation charters between French regions and towns and those in Azerbaijan. Since 2011, 11 such charters have been signed, and there is a high level of decentralised co-operation between France and Azerbaijan in business and cultural terms. An agreement on academic exchange has also been signed between Ganja University and Reims University, and it is hoped that today's meetings will prompt new areas of collaboration between Reims and Azerbaijan.

A second roundtable concentrating on economic opportunities in the Azerbaijani non-oil sector followed. The Azerbaijani



Sarkhan Alakbarov, Representative of the Confederation of Entrepreneurs of the Azerbaijani Republic (ASK), outlined the objectives and synergies of the organisation

government is currently seeking to diversify the economy away from over-reliance on hydrocarbons and is seeking collaboration with French businesses. This presentation before over 30 local industry kingpins gave an invaluable overview of the economic fabric of the country; its business climate; investment opportunities; followed by presentations covering a range of sectors, including viticulture; agribusiness; tourism; and pharmaceutical manufacture.

Mrs Gourdin began by outlining the strengths of the Azerbaijani economy, but also the challenges that it currently faces in seeking to achieve diversification. She explained that the country is open to French investment, joint ventures and the application of French industrial specialist knowledge, and that such developments as the Baku International Seaport and the launch of Special Economic Zones (SEZs) are aimed at kickstarting the non-oil economy.

Lawyer James Hogan, Partner at Dentons, which supported the event, gave an insight into the judicial and business environment in Azerbaijan, including its political stability, the emergent middle-class, the respect for the inviolability of contracts and the genuine will to diversify the economy. He explained some of the agreements that have been ratified by France and Azerbaijan, aimed at eliminating double-taxation and fiscal fraud, and the legislation that has been passed to attract and protect the interests of foreign investors. The tax and customs dispensations and simplifications of SEZs were also outlined, as was the concept of the 'single window' for business registration that facilitates completion in less than five working days.

Sarkhan Alakbarov, Representative of the Confederation of Entrepreneurs of the Azerbaijani Republic (ASK), who was recently nominated as official representative of ASK in France,

explained how ASK provides a platform for Azerbaijani entrepreneurs to enter the French market and vice-versa, providing legal counsel and match-making opportunities.

Finally, Claude Humbert, Director of Industry, Innovation, International Relations and Durable Development, CCI International Champagne-Ardenne, outlined the industries of the region, many of which mirror those currently being

developed in Azerbaijan, indicating where there is scope for future collaboration, especially in the agricultural sector, the region being the primary producer of cereals in France. The evening culminated with a jazz concert by the Elchin Shirinov Trio as part of the annual Sunnyside Jazz Festival before around 120 ecstatic fans, in advance of his performance at the renowned Festival Jazz à Saint-Germain-des-Prés Paris the following evening (see p.6).

EBRD to issue first loans to Azerbaijan in 2016

For the first time, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) will provide loans to Azerbaijan in 2016 to support agribusiness and women's entrepreneurship projects. The decision was revealed by Neil McKain, Head, EBRD Baku office, during a workshop on 5 May. He reiterated that the key factor behind the EBRD country strategy for Azerbaijan is to support economic diversification.

Mr McKain explained that the EBRD annually finances dozens of projects in support of small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Azerbaijan, assisting at all stages, starting from the allocation of funds and concluding with marketing the product. The EBRD also provides consulting services to ensure that financial reporting, marketing and other elements are compliant with international practice.



There were many networking opportunities

He added that, to date, the EBRD has already helped nearly 400 companies with business development. Mr McKain also revealed that around \$50m (£35m) would be allocated during 2016 to finance the agricultural sector within the framework of the Azerbaijan Agricultural Finance Facility (AZAFF) in the country. The EBRD is also organising training sessions for bankers, focusing on agricultural lending.

New gas condensate reserves in the offing

Speaking at the *SOCAR International Practical Conference on the Caspian Basin and Central Asia: Trade, Logistics, Oil Processing and Oil and Chemistry*, Natig Aliyev, Azerbaijani Energy Minister, commented that Azerbaijan is currently seeking to exploit all untapped gas condensate reserves in its Caspian Sea fields.

He continued: "There is a need to develop mining projects, and all resources are available for this. In the future, we will see the third stage of the full-field development of the Shah Deniz gas condensate field. The potential of the Azeri-Chirag-Guneshli (ACG) oil and gas field block in the Azerbaijani sector of the Caspian Sea has not been fully exploited. It is necessary to

conduct additional exploration there and prospect for the deposits below the productive stratum."

Mr Aliyev commented that peak oil production was recorded at the level of 51m tonnes in Azerbaijan in 2010. He explained that the shortfall in oil production and the reduced oil price would be offset by increased gas production. In total, 8m tonnes of oil were produced on the ACG field in the first quarter of 2016, of which 5.3m tonnes were exported. Altogether, some 70bn m³ (bcm) of gas and 18m tonnes of condensate have been produced at the Shah Deniz gas and condensate field since the beginning of its production operation in 2006.

Dentons client alerts and guidance

Following the approval of a law *On the Implementation of Special Financing for Investment Projects in Connection with Construction and Infrastructure Facilities* by Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev on 15 March, leading law firm Dentons (a TEAS member company) issued a client alert. The new law introduces options for the potential financing of Build-Operate-Transfer (BOT) projects, and the full alert can be read at <http://bit.ly/dentonsbot>.

Dentons also issued a client alert on the new law regarding licenses and permits, aimed at protecting and promoting local entrepreneurship and encouraging business transparency, which was passed on 21 April. To see this, go to <http://bit.ly/dentonslicensesandpermits>, and in a similar vein it issued a client alert on additional investment incentives, focusing on tax dispensations regarding the Garadagh Industrial Park and other measures aimed

at attracting foreign investment. Go to <http://bit.ly/dentonsincentives> to see the full text.

Furthermore, Dentons has published the tenth edition of its business guide entitled *Succeeding in Azerbaijan*, distilling the guidance emanating from more than 20 years of its Azerbaijani office. To download this publication visit <http://bit.ly/dentonsdoingbusiness2016>.

TAP construction begins

Greece has begun construction of a 550km section of the Trans-Adriatic Pipeline (TAP), with Alexis Tsipras, Greek Prime Minister, stressing the need to create 8000 jobs to assist the crisis-hit economy. Following completion in 2019, TAP will bring gas from the Shah Deniz 2 field via western Turkey to Greece, Albania and across the Adriatic to Italy. TAP is 870km long, running from the Greek city of Komotini to Puglia, and will constitute one of the three pipelines comprising the Southern Energy Corridor, which will play a major role in maintaining EU energy security.

TAP will traverse 215km across Albania, with 105km below the Adriatic and a final 8km passing across Italy. Speaking at a ceremony in Thessaloniki, Mr Tsipras said that the pipeline would usher Greece and Europe into a new era, commenting: "TAP is one of the greatest direct foreign investment projects to be carried out in Greece." He explained that, for crisis-hit Greece, it represents an investment of over €1.5bn (£1.2bn).

Maros Sefcovic, Vice-President, EU, explained that TAP would meet the

needs of 7m households and that: "Once completed, TAP will be a major asset in the European energy security tool box. By opening up access to gas from Azerbaijan, TAP will allow many countries, including those in Central and South-East Europe, to diversify their gas sources."

"The Southern Energy Corridor will be vital for reaching the Energy Union objectives of diversifying sources, routes and ensuring energy security. Therefore, timely completion is crucial so that gas from the new suppliers can flow to Europe by 2020."



Part of the destruction unleashed by Armenian firepower on Agdam during the 'Four Day War' in April (Photo: AzerTac)

Karabakh in focus at SciencesPo-CERI

Coming in the wake of the reignition of the Armenian–Azerbaijani conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh that raged from 2–5 April, a conference was held at SciencesPo-CERI in Paris on 24 June entitled *Quels risques de Nouvelle Guerre du Haut-Karabakh? (What are the risks of a new war in Nagorno-Karabakh?)*. The audience included H.E. Elchin Amirbayov, Azerbaijani Ambassador to France; Ambassador Bernard Fassier, French representative, OSCE Minsk Group from 2004–10; H.E. Jean Perrin, first French Ambassador to Azerbaijan from 1992–96; and numerous journalists, including a reporter from *Le Monde*.

Chaired by Bayram Balci, Researcher, SciencesPo-CERI, the event began with a speech by Ambassador Jacques Faure, French representative, OSCE Minsk Group from 2010–15. Commenting on the actual state of the conflict, mediations and the prospects for resolution, he made reference to the Nobel prize-winning Belarusian journalist Svetlana Alexievich, who wrote *The End of the Red Man or the Time of Disenchantment (La Fin du L'Homme Rouge ou le temps du désenchantement)*, which won the Prix Médicis Essai Laureate Award in 2013. In this book, she collected testimonies from victims of the Soviet period, including portraits of Azerbaijanis and Armenians who were impacted by the collapse of the Soviet Union, and by the war over Nagorno-Karabakh, which raged between 1988–94. The Ambassador insisted that it should be recognised that Nagorno-Karabakh and the seven surrounding regions were under military occupation by a foreign power.

Ambassador Faure spoke of the significance of the reignition in violence, which saw the use of the latest heavy artillery and drones, and resulted in Azerbaijan recapturing around 800ha of territory, including strategic heights. In itself, this was a victory for Azerbaijan and a loss for Armenia, given that it was the first time that Azerbaijan could claim back a small part of its occupied territories. Ambassador Faure stated that the dialogue brokered by the OSCE Minsk Group had been frozen since January 2016, stressing the need for further negotiations between the sides. However, since April, dialogue between Azerbaijan, Armenia and the OSCE Minsk Group has recommenced, with an important

Summit 3+2 being held in Vienna on 16 May and a Presidential Summit in St Petersburg on 20 June.

H.E. Gabriel Keller, French Ambassador to Azerbaijan from 2008–12, gave the Bakuvian perspective. He referred to the ethnic cleansing undertaken by Armenia when it occupied nearly 20 per cent of Azerbaijani territory from 1988–94. He spoke of the pressure that has been exerted on Armenia by the UN since 1993 to return the occupied territories, and that this remains a priority issue. He also referred to the current challenging relationship between Azerbaijan and the West.

H.E. Serge Smessow, former French Ambassador to Armenia, gave the Armenian position. He commented on how Armenia attempts to maintain the status quo in Nagorno-Karabakh. Ambassador Smessow also made reference to the many demonstrations organised by the Azerbaijani diaspora outside Armenian diplomatic missions around the world, underlining that this had attracted a great deal of attention from both Armenian government and international experts, given that such well-organised and co-ordinated actions were a first. He made reference to the role of Russia in supporting the Armenian economy, providing weapons and maintaining the conflict, and the impact of the situation on the Armenian economy – notably because borders are closed with two neighbours (Azerbaijan and Turkey) and all pipelines have been diverted to avoid Armenian territory, thereby ensuring that it does not profit from the natural resources of the region.

Thornike Gordadze, Researcher, Institut des Hautes Études de Défense Nationale (IHEDN), spoke of the regional risks emanating from deterioration of the security situation around Nagorno-Karabakh. He stressed that the concept of a 'frozen conflict' is a misnomer in this case, and that it is more accurate to refer to it as a 'sleeping conflict'. He also commented that the EU and US regard the conflict as being in the east between two longstanding enemies, and therefore rather irrelevant, and highlighted that Iran remains pro-Armenian, notably because of the 35m ethnic Azerbaijanis living in Northern Iran. Mr Gordadze made reference to the excellent relations between Azerbaijan and Georgia, which

shares a similarly challenging relationship with Russia, due to the Abkhazia/South Ossetia issue. Drawing a parallel with the unrecognised illegal regime in Nagorno-Karabakh, he underlined that the Georgian authorities do not speak to the puppet regimes in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, but directly to the country responsible for these territorial issues – Russia.

Ambassador Fassier began the debate that followed by explaining how all elements for resolution of the conflict are contained within the Madrid Principles, as drawn up by the OSCE Minsk Group and accepted by Azerbaijan, yet never ratified by Armenia. These stipulate the need for an incremental, phased Armenian withdrawal from the seven regions surrounding Nagorno-Karabakh. In Nagorno-Karabakh itself, there would be a fair consultation of inhabitants regarding its future status, as a pre-requisite, provided that all Azerbaijani Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and refugees could safely return to their lands prior to such consultations over self-determination. He concluded by explaining the intransigence of the Armenian position under Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan, which regards the occupied territories as being 'liberated'.

Ambassador Perrin commented on the role of the international Armenian diaspora in fanning the flames of the conflict, although Mr Smessow dismissed this, stating that the diaspora has negligible

influence. He stressed that the diaspora constantly refers to memories of identity, whereas the emphasis of the population in Armenia is on survival.

Ambassador Amirbayov criticised the map of Nagorno-Karabakh displayed throughout the event, which was inaccurate and endorsed the independence of Nagorno-Karabakh, using Armenian placenames as if these were entrenched in fact. He explained the extent of ethnic cleansing that had taken place in the occupied territories, the destructive role of the Armenian diaspora and its lobby in Parliaments across Europe, and the tragedy of the almost one million Azerbaijanis who remain as IDPs. He finally laid the blame for the current impasse at the feet of Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan, who was born in Karabakh itself.

Finally, Ambassador Faure explained that the Bakuvian vision remains constant, and that there is no easy resolution to the conflict. He explained that the 'Four Day War' marked the first return of any territory to Azerbaijan in over 20 years, and again commented that it was easy for the Armenian diaspora to be the greatest patriots as they live outside of the country, and are thus unaffected by the hardships caused by the conflict. He concluded that the status of the occupied territories is 'a disaster', with anti-personnel mines being laid, demonstrating the conflict was far from 'frozen'.

EU supports calls for peaceful settlement

Speaking in advance of the Presidential Summit in St Petersburg on 20 June, Malena Mard, Head, EU delegation to Baku, stressed that the EU is hopeful that the meeting would result in forward traction towards settlement of the Armenian–Azerbaijani conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh. Recalling the role of the OSCE Minsk Group, tasked with working towards the achievement of a negotiated settlement, she stated that the EU "supports this process and hopes that

the next meeting...can become a concrete step towards settlement of the conflict."

Recently, representatives of the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chair nations (the US, France and Russia) delivered documents to the relevant Foreign Ministers on both sides regarding expansion of the existing office of the Personal Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office and the establishment of an OSCE investigative mechanism.

Maja Kocijancic, Spokesperson, EU High Representative, noted that the recent Vienna Summit 3+2 meeting represented a necessary step towards achieving peaceful conflict resolution. He stressed the importance of the recent commitments made by the two Presidents towards maintaining the ceasefire and peaceful conflict settlement. He added that any future meeting "should take further steps towards the commitments achieved in Vienna."

Armenian missile engine components found in Tartar

On 8 June, the Azerbaijani National Agency for Mine Action (ANAMA) discovered two more unexploded ordnances (UXOs) in the Tartar region of Azerbaijan, fired by Armenia. ANAMA informed *Trend* news that its experts had examined the territory of Jamilli village in the Tartar region, where it found and destroyed components from two Grad missile engines and two unexploded ordnance. Altogether, an area of 51,000m² was inspected and cleansed.

During additional ANAMA examinations in Zardab, Tartar, Shamkir, Agjabedi, Agdam, Fizuli, Tovuz, Goranboy, Samukh, Shamkir, Jalilabad, Ujar, Mingachevir, Baku and Sumgayit from 7 April–8 June, 1509 UXOs, 14 anti-personnel and seven anti-tank mines were detected and destroyed. Currently, special ANAMA rapid response teams using minesweeper dogs are continuing their UXO detection operations in the settlements near the 'contact line'.

Azerbaijan and Turkey begin joint military exercises

According to the Azerbaijani–Turkish military co-operation agreement, exercises involving the armed forces of the two countries have taken place in the city of Kars. Azerbaijani Lieutenant-General Karam Mustafayev, Commander of the Detached Combined Arms Army and General Ismail Serdar Savaş, Commander of the Third Army of the Republic of Turkey, led the exercises. Representatives of the Georgian Armed Forces were observers.

The main objective of the live-fire tactical exercises, conducted with the involvement of more than 1200 servicemen, is the development of relations between the forces of both countries in order to optimise collective efficiency.

Appeal by Azerbaijanis

On 4 June, participants in the fourth *Congress of World Azerbaijanis* held in Baku made an appeal to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the EU and the international community in connection with the activity of the Metsamor nuclear power plant in Armenia. This 40-year-old facility – parts of which date back to 1969 – is of outmoded design, without a containment building and is located in a seismic zone. It currently supplies 40 per cent of all Armenian energy, yet an EU envoy has described it as being "a danger to the entire region."

According to the appeal by the Congress participants, the Metsamor nuclear power plant poses a major threat to the region and the world, and it has been proven that nuclear waste from the plant is being dumped into rivers flowing through Azerbaijani territory. It goes on to read: "Whilst appealing to all international organisations, especially the IAEA and the EU, we call for urgent action to be taken to suspend the activity of the Metsamor nuclear power plant operating in Armenia, thereby ensuring security in the world. We hope that the international community will not spare its efforts to prevent a disaster in the region."

President Aliyev withdraws from Bundestag meetings in protest

During his official visit to Berlin, Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev cancelled his scheduled meetings in the German Bundestag over the adoption of a resolution recognising the events of 1915 regarding Armenia as an alleged 'genocide'. The furore also saw him abandon a meeting with

the German–Azerbaijani Friendship Group. Halil Akinci, Chairman, Senior Advisory Board, Caspian Strategy Institute (HASEN), commented that the cancellation of the meetings demonstrated that this injustice would not remain unanswered,

saying: "On the other hand, such a step from President Aliyev is a response to the double-standards of the West, who are silent regarding the Khojaly Massacre of the recent past. President Aliyev has also demonstrated that Azerbaijan is always with Turkey."

Statement from the Bundestag South Caucasian All-Party Group

The South Caucasian All-Party Group in the German Bundestag has issued a statement on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. It reads: "The All-Party Parliamentary Group is deeply concerned about the violent developments in the Nagorno-Karabakh region that reached a new level of escalation some weeks ago. The current developments have to end as quickly as possible. Every single exchange of fire, every injury and every human life claimed by this conflict is one too many.

"This year, Germany holds the OSCE Chair. We demand swift action within the scope of the OSCE and its Minsk Group to stop these unnecessary casualties. Germany has a great opportunity this year to contribute productively towards the de-escalation of the dramatic situation in the conflict region. In a joint press conference with Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan, Chancellor Angela Merkel emphasised this constructive participation within the framework of the OSCE chairmanship regarding settlement of the conflict. As the relevant All-Party Parliamentary Group, we support this approach without any doubt.

"In its resolutions (Nos. 822, 853, 874 and 884), the UN General Assembly concluded that the current status, which

violates international law, has to end. It does not comply with international law, and has to be condemned categorically. The All-Party Parliamentary Group supports the implementation of these resolutions in order to end the violence in the South Caucasus. A serious ceasefire is a fundamental requirement, prior to returning to the negotiation table.

"It must be noted positively that Azerbaijan ended the military action unilaterally, and we hope that this will contribute to a de-escalation of the current situation. The ceasefire now has to be kept by both sides.

"The South Caucasian All-Party Group in the Bundestag engages in talks with both representatives of the conflict parties, together with international negotiators, in order to encourage sustainable peace talks. Besides the cultivation of partnerships with the respective parliaments, the situation regarding Nagorno-Karabakh is a main concern of the Group. We seek to strengthen the process for establishing peaceful conditions, and this is clearly of exceptional difficulty. However, especially in the light of the OSCE chairmanship, it is our moral duty to find ways to swiftly end this unacceptable state."

Russia to sell S-300 defence systems to Azerbaijan

Russian state arms exporter Rosoboronexport signed an agreement with the Azerbaijani Defence Ministry regarding the supply of two S-300PMU-2 Favorit (SA-20b Gargoyle b) missile battalions last year, according to leading Russian business daily *Vedomosti*. A spokesman for the company stated that the contract would be fulfilled during the next two years.

Mikhail Barabanov, Editor-in-Chief, *Moscow Defence Brief* magazine, reflected that the deal, worth at least \$300m (£100.7m), is the most expensive single purchase of weapons by a former Soviet state, excluding Russia. Until the 1990s, Azerbaijan was equipped with one of the most advanced air defence systems in the Soviet Union, although this is now obsolete.

Ruslan Pukhov, Head, Russian Centre for Analysis of Strategies and Technologies (CAST), explained that Azerbaijan has been actively modernising its military arsenal in recent years, including the purchase of weapons from Ukraine, Belarus, Israel and South Africa.



A Russian S-300 system on manoeuvres

330,000 signatures for White House petition

On 10 June, the White House administration officially answered a petition signed by a staggering 33,000 people that stresses the need for the withdrawal of Armenian troops from Azerbaijani territory. The petition also emphasises the perilous situation of hundreds of thousands of citizens across six regions that are threatened with a humanitarian catastrophe, due to the neglected Sarsang Reservoir, part of which falls within the Armenian-occupied territories. In response to the petition, the White House stated that, as an OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chair, the US is strongly committed to a peaceful and lasting settlement of the Armenian–Azerbaijani conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh.

A White House statement issued on 11 July read: “We have read Resolution 2085 of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) and, although the US is not a member of PACE, we welcome opportunities to exchange views on the Nagorno-Karabakh peace process with any interested interlocutor.”

According to the statement, the Obama Administration urges the sides to demonstrate restraint and to enter into immediate negotiations, with the objective of agreeing a comprehensive settlement. The statement continues: “As part of our ongoing dialogue with the sides, we have and will continue to facilitate discussions related to humanitarian issues. Management and maintenance of the Sarsang Reservoir is one such issue. We welcome a meeting between technical experts from the sides to discuss water management and dam inspections. The Co-Chairs are ready to facilitate



In March, Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev was greeted by John Kerry, US Secretary of State, on Capitol Hill

such a meeting. Ultimately, resolution of this longstanding conflict depends on the political will of the Armenian and Azerbaijani Presidents. As an OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chair country, we will continue our efforts to advance peace and prosperity in the region.”

More than triple the minimum number of signatories needed to secure a reply by the Obama administration showed their support. However, with the excuse of the US not being PACE member, the White House administration did not give direct support to PACE Resolution 2085 (2016) related to the Sarsang reservoir, which identifies Armenia as the aggressor and calls for the immediate withdrawal of Armenian troops from the region.

Elkhan Suleymanov, Member of the Azerbaijani delegation to PACE, commented: “We welcome the position of the US Administration as not being supportive of a separatist solution for

Nagorno-Karabakh and not leaving the possibility for illegal self-determination. Although the White House answer evades the main question on the basic rights of those affected by the Sarsang situation, we welcome nevertheless that the US administration is not stepping into Armenian rhetoric.

“Of course, we also want the territories surrounding Nagorno-Karabakh to return to Azerbaijani control following the withdrawal of Armenian troops, and the sooner the better. Moreover, we welcome this formulation by the US administration. With regard to the future status of Nagorno-Karabakh, we note that this may be indeed determined when it comes to the level of local autonomy, as is the case in many European countries. Nagorno-Karabakh is, and will always be, part of Azerbaijan, together with the surrounding occupied districts, as was confirmed in four UN Security Council resolutions and recently in PACE Resolution 2085 (2016).”

Karabakh highlighted at the French Senate

Readers of *TEAS Magazine* may recall the debate organised in the French Senate by the French Geographical Society on 18 March at the initiative of TEAS France. Go to www.socgeo.org/a-decouverte-de-lazerbaïdjan/ to read the full speech by H.E. Elchin Amirbayov, Azerbaijani Ambassador to France.

During his speech, he characterised the current state of bilateral relations: “Furthermore, Franco–Azerbaijani relations are excellent and at the highest level. During the past five years, the two French Presidents have visited Azerbaijan on three occasions. The high level of these relations is not solely attributable to its economic and geostrategic positioning. They are equally due to, in effect, the role

of France in an attempt to resolve the principal international problem confronting Azerbaijan – the conflict with Armenia.

“I will not dwell for long on the subject of Nagorno-Karabakh, but I would like to recall that, following the territorial claim of Armenia, a large area of Azerbaijan – around 20 per cent – including those areas around Nagorno-Karabakh, was occupied by Armenian forces. This continues up to the present day.

“This occupation has been condemned by the UN and the Council of Europe as a flagrant violation of international rights. In effect, in 1993, the UN Security Council successively adopted four very clear resolutions. These request an immediate

and unilateral withdrawal of Armenian forces from the occupied territories of Azerbaijan, condemning them as ‘occupying forces’.

“In 2005, in the same manner, PACE adopted Resolution 1416, where it characterised the situation, stating: ‘the occupation of foreign territory by a member state constitutes a grave violation of the obligations incumbent on that state as a member of the Council of Europe, reaffirming the right of the internally displaced persons (IDPs) from the conflict zone to return home with security and dignity.’ This conflict has consequences for a significant number of refugees and IDPs – almost one million Azerbaijanis altogether – accounting for around 11 per cent of the population.”

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