

# TEAS

M A G A Z I N E



Culture | Public Affairs  
Business | Philanthropy



(Photo: Dilaver Najafov)

## GRACEFUL GYMNASTICS IMAGE WINS TEAS AZERBAIJAN – SPORT IN FOCUS COMPETITION

Also in this issue:

Summing up 2015 – expert roundtable on Nagorno-Karabakh  
Marc Verwilghen – new directions for TEAS Belgium  
Ambassador Isgandarov – striving to enhance EU political dialogue  
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TEAS Press launches a new era in children's publishing

12 / 2014  
[www.teas.eu](http://www.teas.eu)

Please see inside for how to win £100 of Amazon vouchers



# Welcome to the TEAS Magazine

The European Azerbaijan Society (TEAS) is a UK-registered pan-European organisation 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 Alan Attryde, Secretary, Royal Society for Asian Affairs, who won the competition in the November issue of the *TEAS Magazine*. 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](mailto:editor@teas.eu) by 17.00hrs (GMT) on 5 January:

1. What is the title of the winning photograph for the *Azerbaijan – Sport in Focus* competition?
2. What was the final score in the AS Saint-Étienne–FC Qarabağ match on 27 November?
3. Who is the new coach of the Azerbaijani national football team?
4. Which book by David Hone lent its name to the seminar on renewable energy that was co-sponsored by TEAS in Geneva?
5. What was the name of the exhibition in Baku of photographs by Rufat Abas, winner of the third prize in the *Azerbaijan – Sport in Focus* competition?
6. Which composition by jazz-mugham pioneer Rafiq Babayev was performed during the *Discovering the Tar* concert?
7. What does the acronym EPNK stand for?
8. Can you name one of the speakers at *The Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict – The Uses and Misuses of History* roundtable at the University of Birmingham?
9. Where was *You're Always With Me* by Ilyas Afandiyev performed in London?
10. What is the profession of Marc Verwilghen outside of the political arena?

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

### 23 February

#### Khojaly Commemoration Concert (Paris)

Théâtre Adyar, 4 square Rapp, 75007, Paris  
20.30hrs. Admission free. RSVP: [paris@teas.eu](mailto:paris@teas.eu)

A concert to commemorate the victims of the Khojaly Massacre – the worst single atrocity of the Armenian–Azerbaijani conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh – which claimed the lives of 613 civilians in 1992. Musicians will include Azerbaijani violinist Nazrin Rashidova, who will lead her FeMusa Ensemble.

### 25 February

#### Khojaly Commemoration Concert (London)

St John's, Smith Square, London, SW1P 3HA  
18.30hrs. Admission free. RSVP: [culture@teas.eu](mailto:culture@teas.eu)

### 27 February

#### Azerbaijan – Sport in Focus Exhibition (London)

gallery@oxo, Oxo Tower Wharf, Bargehouse Street, London, SE1 9PH  
Admission free: RSVP: [culture@teas.eu](mailto:culture@teas.eu)

This opening will showcase 70 stunning images submitted by photographers from across the globe for the TEAS *Azerbaijan – Sport in Focus* competition, in recognition of Azerbaijan's hosting of the forthcoming inaugural European Games.

## Mailing List

TEAS is always bringing the latest news, views and interviews from Azerbaijan. Sign up to our mailing-list to receive the latest information straight to your inbox: [www.teas.eu](http://www.teas.eu)

## 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](mailto:membership@teas.eu).





Lionel Zetter, Director, TEAS

## From the TEAS Director

The front cover of the December issue shows the winning entry in our latest photographic competition, entitled *Azerbaijan – Sport in Focus*. This competition was a huge success, receiving over 300 entries submitted by 50 photographers from 10 countries.

Also on the cultural front, the European Azerbaijan School (EAS) – founded by TEAS – has won the International Science Olympiad, and the TEAS Press publishing house has just published 21 inspirational children's books in modern Azerbaijani translations. These were recently launched to wide acclaim in Baku.

The establishment of the Azerbaijani–EU visa facilitation committee hopefully signals the end of delays in visas being allocated for trips to and from Europe. In recent years, this has caused frustration for businesspeople eager to boost two-way trade and investment and has stifled development of the tourism sector.

The appointment of experienced diplomat Robert Cekuta as US Ambassador to Azerbaijan has been ratified, and we extend a warm welcome to him. We also greet Marc Verwilghen, a former Belgian Senator and Minister, who joins TEAS as Director of the Brussels office (see pp.14–15).

Tensions on the 'contact line', which have been rising for months, reached a crescendo when soldiers from the Azerbaijani army shot down an Armenian helicopter – one of two that were threatening their positions and overflying Azerbaijani territory. As the unrecognised breakaway territory continues to be shunned by the international community, its efforts to attract attention – and sympathy – are becoming evermore strident.

**Lionel Zetter, Director, TEAS**

## Robert Cekuta appointed new US Ambassador

The US Senate Committee on Foreign Relations has approved the appointment of Robert Cekuta as the new US Ambassador to Azerbaijan, following his nomination by President Barack Obama.

Ambassador Cekuta currently works in the US Department of State Energy Resources Office, where he is Principal Deputy Assistance Secretary, and controls the work of the Bureau in relation to transparency and access to energy. He previously served as a diplomat in Tokyo and Berlin, where



Robert Cekuta, seen speaking last year in Buenos Aires on energy issues (Photo: Embajada de EEUU en la Argentina)

he led engagement by the US Government on economic issues. His predecessor, Ambassador Richard Morningstar, concluded his diplomatic term in July 2014.

## EAS students win International Science Olympiad

Students at the European Azerbaijan School (EAS), established by TEAS in 2011, have won the Sixth International Science Olympiad in Antalya, Turkey. EAS fielded a team of eight members, comprising Murad Zeynalli (geography), Vagif Suleymanov (geography) and Gunay Mammadova (English) all of whom won first prizes; Gunay Mammadova (mathematics), who garnered a second prize; and Vagif Suleymanov (English) and Emine Huseynli (mathematics) who achieved third position.

In 2013, EAS was admitted to the European Council of International Schools (ECIS), the global membership organisation specialising in primary and secondary education. It was recognised as a candidate school under the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme (IBDP) on 1 September 2014. The website is [www.eas.az](http://www.eas.az).

## Azerbaijan–EU visa committee established

Work is underway to establish a new Azerbaijan–EU visa facilitation committee. Malena Mard, Head, EU Baku office, told *Trend News* that the committee would monitor implementation of the visa facilitation agreements between Azerbaijan and the EU, which became effective on 1 September.

Mrs Mard said: "We want to ensure that the agreement is beneficial to both parties, and I believe this step is important for further advancement." She added that the number of twinning programmes between Azerbaijan and the EU had recently

escalated, and continued: "Both EU member states and the Azerbaijani side are exploring methods of co-operation in the fields of tourism, pensions, the environment and other spheres."

EU–Azerbaijani relations are maintained under the Partnership and Co-operation Agreement, which became effective in 1999. This has subsequently formed the basis of relations regarding political dialogue, trade, investment, economic, legislative and cultural co-operation. Azerbaijan is also a member of the EU Eastern Partnership.

## British Ambassador visits Baku State University

H.E. Irfan Siddiq, British Ambassador to Azerbaijan, has visited Baku State University (BSU) to meet Professor Abel Maharramov, the Rector. He highlighted the activities of BSU, together with stressing the importance of maintaining and developing scientific and academic relations between Azerbaijan and the UK. Ambassador Siddiq and Mr Maharramov discussed ways of further developing relations in this sector between the two countries.



H.E. Irfan Siddiq, UK Ambassador to Azerbaijan (right), meets Professor Abel Maharramov, Rector, Baku State University

## New EC Energy Vice-President meets President Aliyev

Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev has received a delegation led by Maros Sefcovic, the new Vice-President of the European Commission for Energy. Noting the strength of relations between the EU and Azerbaijan, Mr Sefcovic said he was interested in further expanding these ties.

Stressing the importance of co-operation with Azerbaijan in the energy sector, Mr Sefcovic explained the strategic importance of the Southern Gas Corridor. Congratulating him on his appointment, President Aliyev described his visit as indicative of this strong relationship.

## Saint-Étienne draw with “refugees’ club” in a hard-fought battle

On 27 November, French side AS Saint-Étienne drew 1–1 in the knockout stages of the UEFA Europa league against a strong Azerbaijani side from FC Qarabağ. Playing in their home ground of the ‘Cauldron’, the French side was hard-pushed to resist the skills of the visitors, which were ably demonstrated 15 minutes into the match when Vüqar Nadirov lobbed the ball into the net, defeating keeper Stéphane Ruffier. Some fine saves by Ibrahim Šehić also defeated any attempts to break the deadlock. Saint-Étienne equalised within six minutes, but could get no further against a resolute Qarabağ defence.

Prior to the match, representatives from TEAS France distributed USB sticks containing the short film documentary *Offside*, which tells the story of FC Qarabağ, directed by the renowned US author and journalist Thomas Goltz. The film was inspired by a meeting with Dutch sports journalist and writer Arthur Huizinga, author of *Offside: Football in Exile*, illustrated by



Loyal Qarabağ supporters cheer on their team in the match against home side Saint-Étienne

photojournalist Dirk-Jan Visser, and *Never a Homegame: A Football War in the Caucasus*.

Both books and the TEAS-produced film *Offside* (see [bit.ly/offsideqarabag](http://bit.ly/offsideqarabag)) tell the unique story of FC Qarabağ, which is inextricably interwoven with the Armenian–Azerbaijani conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh. In fact, this year the club won the Azerbaijani Championship – despite the fact that the club is unable to play in its original stadium,

due to the ongoing Armenian occupation of Agdam.

Effectively, FC Qarabağ is the only refugee club in Europe, due to the Armenian invasion of Agdam in 1993 at the height of the conflict, which destroyed the stadium, facilities and players’ houses. It is now forced to play 270km away in Baku, where it shares the Tofiq Bahramov Stadium with the Azerbaijani national side.

## Former Croatian midfielder Robert Prosinecki appointed Azerbaijan coach

According to *The Guardian* in the UK, former Croatian midfielder Robert Prosinecki will face his home country in the Euro 2016 qualifiers, having been appointed as Azerbaijani Head Coach. He replaces Bertie Vogts, who quit in October after seven years in the role.

Mr Prosinecki, aged 45 years, agreed to steer the Azerbaijani side until the end of the 2018 World Cup qualifying campaign, and inherits a team standing at the bottom of their Euro 2016 qualifying group without a point. He said: “Maybe we will not be able to beat Italy and Croatia, but we can play better than we have done so far.”

Azerbaijan lost 2–1 playing away to Italy on 10 October and were thrashed 6–0 in Croatia three days later. They began the campaign with a 2–1 home defeat by Bulgaria and lost

their last qualifier 1–0 to visitors Norway in mid-November. Mr Prosinecki commented: “I am an optimist, and I believe this team has potential. We have to keep on working. After four losses, we have to get things back on track and must beat Malta in March.”

During his playing career, Mr Prosinecki appeared 49 times for Croatia, scoring 10 goals, and became their Assistant Coach after hanging up his boots. He has also been Head Coach of Red Star Belgrade and the Turkish club Kayserispor, which he managed until the end of 2013.

His predecessor, Berti Vogts, who led Germany to victory during Euro 1996, took over as Azerbaijan manager in April 2008 and helped them earn a record nine points in the qualifying campaign for the 2014 World Cup.



Robert Prosinecki, new Head Coach for the Azerbaijani national team, plans to improve the success rate of the squad and the quality of the game in the country

## Trump International Hotel to open in Baku

According to the *Travel Daily News*, the Trump International Hotel and Tower will open in Baku in June 2015. The 33-floor landmark will be located on Hasan Aliyev Street in the Nasimi District of Baku, and feature 72 ultra-luxury residences and 189 hotel rooms. Overlooking the Zaha Hadid-designed Heydar Aliyev Centre, the hotel will provide spectacular views of the city and the Caspian

Sea, and focus on luxury of the highest level.

Donald Trump, Chairman and President, The Trump Organisation, said: “When we open in 2015, visitors and residents will experience a luxurious property unlike anything else in Baku – it will be amongst the finest in the world.”



## UK crisis brings Azerbaijan's role in EU energy security centre-stage

On 18 November, TEAS organised a timely debate in Parliament to discuss the future of the UK's energy supply and how this may be secured in the future. This came at an important time, as the past year has seen the signing of the \$45bn (£28.7bn) final investment decision (FID) between the Azerbaijani government and the BP-led Shah Deniz Consortium. Most recently, the groundbreaking ceremony on the Southern Gas Corridor took place. This will annually see up to 30bn m<sup>3</sup> (bcm) of Caspian and Central Asian gas being piped direct to an interconnector in Italy, bypassing Russia and ensuring European energy security. The event was chaired by Jack Pegoraro, UK Public Affairs Manager, TEAS.

David Hamilton MP, who hosted the debate, explained the background to the current crisis: "The biggest question is security of supply. It has become apparent that there is the potential for blackouts across the UK. Renewable energy technology has a role to play, but the public cannot wait for these systems to be constructed. There have been no regular blackouts in the UK since 1985, and UK politicians are focusing on avoiding such issues.

"When I visited Azerbaijan earlier this year, I became interested by the way in which the BP-led Shah Deniz Consortium is developing its terminals and constructing the Southern Corridor to bring gas to the UK. The UK public expect continuity of supply, and it is the responsibility of government to ensure this."



Graham Stringer MP, Energy and Climate Change Committee Member outlined the deficiencies of current UK energy policy

Andy Sawford MP, Shadow Minister for Communities and Local Government, commented: "Big political decisions need to be made, and we need a great deal of courage to ensure long-term energy supply security. My recent visit to Ukraine demonstrated that this is an important challenge that needs to be addressed, as EU energy supply and security is at risk.

It is good to hear what is happening in Azerbaijan, as the groundbreaking on the Southern Corridor demonstrates that a new source of energy will soon come on stream. An energy mix is necessary, and we need to change the way that the EU energy market operates."

Graham Stringer MP, Energy and Climate Change Committee Member, said: "If we take the three objectives of energy policy

– supply security, cost minimisation and carbon reduction – we are currently failing. The move to renewable energy is taking an enormous amount of time and effort, and much of the necessary science and technology has not been developed."

Stephen Kinnock, Prospective Parliamentary Candidate (PPC) for Aberavon, continued: "Overreliance on Russia has demonstrate that there needs to be an integrated energy policy and market across the EU, and this would increase our ability to negotiate with a range of suppliers and achieve energy security. Throughout the EU, the jury is out regarding questions of safety over shale gas, so we are continuing to focus on conventional gas supplies and how energy security relates to our security in a broader sense. Azerbaijan knows this better than any other country."

## TEAS co-sponsors sustainable energy seminar in Geneva

On 19 November 2014 in Geneva, the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) and the Graduate Institute's Centre for International Environmental Studies jointly organised a seminar entitled *Putting The Genie Back: Two Degrees Will Be Harder Than We Think*, sponsored by TEAS and the German Mission to the office of the UN and other

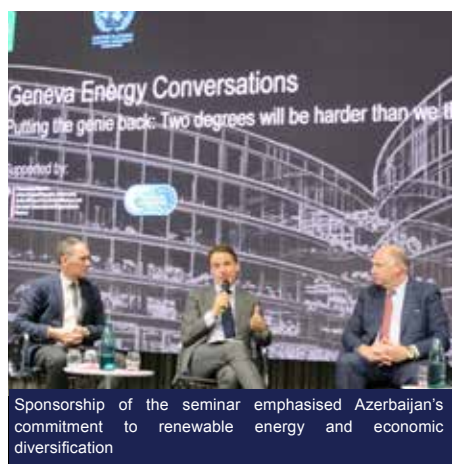
international organisations in Geneva.

Derek Eaton, Executive Director of the Centre for International Environmental Studies, described the event as: "a conversation about how to achieve a sustainable energy future" and went on to acknowledge the role played by the German Mission and TEAS, stating that "tonight's debate would have been impossible without your sponsorship." His views were reflected by Scott Foster, Director, Sustainable Energy Division, UNECE. The TEAS Foundation was represented by Marie-Laetitia Gourdin, Head, TEAS France.

objective of positively impacting the development and implementation of renewable energy techniques throughout the world in order to address issues related to climate change.

"My presence here and TEAS' sponsorship is indicative of the positive impact that Azerbaijan has had, and will continue to have, on the sustainable energy future."

David Hone, Chief Climate Change Advisor, Shell, and author of the book with the same title as the seminar, commented: "In order to consider the future of sustainable energy, it is initially necessary to consider the energy systems that exist. The other dilemma is that there are limitations regarding the rate at which new technologies can be introduced to take the place of hydrocarbons-based systems. The fact that carbon pricing is now back on the agenda is again raising awareness of sustainable energy amongst governments across the world."



Sponsorship of the seminar emphasised Azerbaijan's commitment to renewable energy and economic diversification

## Iconic gymnastics image selected as winner of TEAS photographic competition

After painstakingly sifting through more than 300 entries from ten countries, submitted by over 50 photographers, the iconic image *Gymnast with Pink Ribbon* (see front cover) by Azerbaijani professional photographer Dilaver Najafov has been selected by a panel of three leading photographers as the winner of the TEAS *Azerbaijan – Sport in Focus* competition.

Dilaver is one of the few Azerbaijani photographers to have devoted his entire career to the art of photography. He initially became interested in the art form during his childhood, following the purchase of a camera and other equipment by his father. He is renowned for capturing the essence of sporting achievement, and has worked as staff photographer for the Azerbaijani Ministry of Youth and Sport for nearly 20 years. His work is frequently included in the official periodical of the Ministry.

The topic of the competition reflected Azerbaijan's forthcoming hosting of the inaugural European Games, which will take place across the country from 12–28 June 2015. The photographers were invited to capture such themes as Azerbaijan, sport, universality of sports and the meaning of the Games.



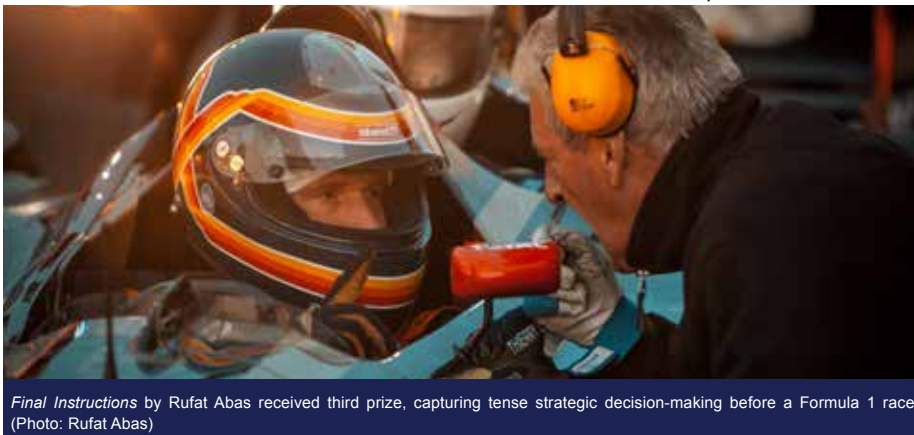
The second prizewinner *Ipanema – Rio de Janeiro* by Paul Robion is emblematic of the Brazilian preoccupations of football and the beach (Photo: Paul Robion)

image encapsulates the enormous popularity of football amongst the Brazilian population.

The third prize was won by Azerbaijani photographer Rufat Abas, who specialises in street photography, for his photo *Final Instructions*, which captures a tense moment at the start of a race. In 2012, he published his first book *Life in Black and White* and last year saw his first exhibition *Street, Life, Emotion* open in Baku. He also

the VII Photo Agency and winner of the 2011 World Press Photo competition, whose work has been published in the *National Geographic*, *New York Times* and *Newsweek*, amongst other publications. In 2013, he travelled to Azerbaijan to capture the everyday lives of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in camps across the country, the results eventually forming the *Unresolved Dreams* exhibition, which has travelled to London, Paris and Berlin. Also sitting on the judging panel was German photographer Philipp Rathmer, who is renowned for his celebrity portraits of Michael Schumacher, Lady Gaga and Sophia Loren. He also undertakes reportage, and was responsible for the stark portraits of IDPs comprising the *Five Roads Back Home* exhibition, which has been shown in Berlin and Istanbul. The final member of the panel was Azerbaijani photographer Agdes Baghirzade, who focuses on capturing the faces and nature of her homeland, for which she has won numerous awards.

The exhibition of 70 images, including the three winning images and 10 runners-up, will now be published in a book, and an exhibition will tour Europe, beginning at London's OXO Tower Gallery on 27 February, and then travel to France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany and Turkey.



*Final Instructions* by Rufat Abas received third prize, capturing tense strategic decision-making before a Formula 1 race (Photo: Rufat Abas)

The second prizewinner was *Ipanema – Rio de Janeiro (Brazil)* by Paris-based French photographer and videographer Paul Robion, a former journalist, who strives to achieve naturalistic photographs. His evocative, sepia-toned, virtually silhouette

won the Photographer of the Year award from the Azerbaijan Photographers' Union in 2011.

The judging panel included the American photojournalist, Ed Kashi, co-founder of

## 9000 attend Azerbaijani concert in Verona

The world-famous Verona Arena has hosted a unique concert, organised by the Azerbaijani Ministry of Culture and Tourism and the Azerbaijani Embassy to Italy, comprising both Azerbaijani classical and traditional music. The concert was programmed as a musical tribute to Italy and, in particular, the city of Verona and the Veneto region. It featured the 80-piece Orchestra Italiana del Cinema, under the baton of Azerbaijani conductor Yalchin Adigezalov. Attendees included Flavio

Tosi, Mayor of Verona, and Vaqif Sadiqov, Azerbaijani Ambassador to Italy.

The Azerbaijani Trio Garabagh performed several mughams, and tenor Azer Rzazade and soprano Aygun Bayramova sang numerous Azerbaijani operatic arias and popular songs. The Orchestra Italiana del Cinema went on to perform selections from Italian films and Italian popular singer Al Bano concluded the concert with a selection of his hit recordings.



The rhapsodic voice of tenor Azer Rzazade amazed the opera aficionados amongst the Italian audience



## Buta – combining genres and styles

The Buta Festival of Azerbaijani Arts, which runs until March 2015, has continued with two fascinating and inspirational concerts in London combining Azerbaijani music and instrumentation with western idioms. The first of these – *Mugham Night* – took place amidst the Gothic splendour and glorious acoustics of Southwark Cathedral. The ensemble featured Arslan Novrasli (tar), Nurlan Novrasli (khanende), Munis Sharifov (kamancha), Gulsha Agaeva (qanoon), Guseyn Guseynov (balaban) and Vugar Sharifzade (nagara).

Following an introduction from the Very Reverend Andrew Nunn, Dean of Southwark, and Nasib Piriyevev, Director, Buta Arts Centre, the concert comprised a fascinating combination of mughams and folk songs featuring traditional instrumentation, combined with the Floreat Cantus Choir – representing the English choral tradition – to remarkable and evocative effect. The pieces included *Bayati Shiraz* – *Lachin*, *Sari Gelin*, *Chahargah* and *Qarabag Shikestesi*, many of which originated from the regions of Azerbaijan that remain under Armenian occupation. The formal unveiling of *Red Buta*, a sculpture by Teymur Rustamov, preceded the concert, being just one of several examples of public art to be positioned across London during the festival.

Another fascinating evening was organised at the Central Hall Westminster, entitled *Discovering the Tar*, featuring tar virtuoso Arslan Novrasli. Mr Piriyevev began the evening by explaining: "With this concert this evening, in the shadow of Big Ben, I feel we are building

bridges between our peoples and bringing Azerbaijani culture to the heart of the British capital. We are seeking to support creative dialogue between the most talented artists and performers from both countries. It is vital for Azerbaijan to bring its culture to the world, and this is best represented with the 11 strings of the tar."

The evening continued with a vivid demonstration of the versatility of the tar in numerous cross-genre configurations. This began with an *Introduction to Tar*, featuring poetry by Tartlan Novrasli, against the backdrop of the *Shur* mugham. Arslan then joined forces with Azerbaijani flamenco guitarist and singer Chingiz Mustafayev to demonstrate the use of the tar in a Latino setting, the accompanying group including pianist Etibar Asadli. Mr Asadli brought Ruslan Guseynov (bass) and Elvin Bashirov (drums) to the stage for a version of jazz-mugham pioneer Rafiq Babayev's *Freska*, where Arslan's instrument was reminiscent of a mandolin. Arslan concluded the first half with his own exciting *Blues*, where the tar took on the role of the banjo, and he had chance to demonstrate his dexterity, attracting wild applause.

The second half focused on the integration of the tar in a classical context, in collaboration with the Royal Philharmonic Concert Orchestra under the baton of Timothy Henty, starting with Azer Rzayev's *Dushunje* and *Gaytaghi*, featuring Vugar Sharifzade (nagara). The magnificent 66-stop pipe organ, played by Stephen Disley, was brought into use for



Tar virtuoso Arslan Novrasli demonstrated his remarkable versatility and dexterity (Photo: AzerTag)

the dramatic opening to Bach's *Tocatta*, which segued into a tar solo on *Bayati Shiraz* and then into *Sari Gelin*, where it featured khanende Nurlan Novrasli. The concert entered the repertoire of West End Theatre with the *Lake Beneath the Opera House* from Andrew Lloyd-Webber's *Phantom of the Opera*, again featuring the organ and tar. However, the highlight was a unique arrangement of *Summer* from Vivaldi's *Four Seasons*, featuring Arslan on tar, Azerbaijani violinist Rustem Mustafa and Indian percussionist Gurdain Rayatt on tabla. Following rapturous applause there were two encores, the second of which was a breathtaking solo version of Rimsky-Korsakov's *The Flight of the Bumble Bee*.

## 21 books published by TEAS Press children's division

The *Üç alma* (*Three Apples*) children's literature division of the TEAS Press has presented a collection of 21 children's books, including five by Mo Willems, in Azerbaijani translations. Hosted at the Marriott Absheron Hotel, the book launch was attended by politicians, MPs, diplomats, authors and journalists, amongst others.

Author Mo Willems attended the presentation as a special guest. A six-time Emmy Awards winner, he spent nine years as a scriptwriter and animator for the *Sesame Street* television programme and worked for both the Cartoon Network and the Nickelodeon show. During his time in Baku, Mr Willems gave two masterclasses to Azerbaijani young writers, animation producers, and publishers specialising in children's literature, and to children and parents.

Colleen MacDonell, Head, *Üç alma*, welcomed guests to this "monumental and pioneering" event. She explained that the goal of *Üç alma* was to find "the best writers for children in the world, and to translate their books into modern, vibrant Azerbaijani."

Tale Heydarov, Chairman and Founder, TEAS, gave an overview of TEAS' work in promoting Azerbaijan overseas, and quoted the former President Heydar Aliyev, who said that education was integral to building a prosperous future for the country. Mr Heydarov explained that children's literature "plays an important role in the implementation of this sacred duty."



Author Mo Willems autographs a book featuring his character 'Mr Pigeon' for a young reader

Also launched at the same event were translations of four books by the UK author and illustrator David McKean, together with the book *Ricky and Max* by Guido van Heynekin, Dutch writer and illustrator. To see the full range of *Üç alma* publications, go to [www.3alma.az](http://www.3alma.az).

## Ambassador Isgandarov – bringing Azerbaijan to the heart of the EU

H.E. Fuad Isgandarov is Azerbaijani Ambassador to Belgium and the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, and Head of the Azerbaijani Mission to the EU. In his role as a career diplomat, from 2007–12, he was Azerbaijani Ambassador to the Netherlands, whilst simultaneously holding the position of Permanent Azerbaijani Ambassador to the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. He has also been Ambassador-at-Large at the Azerbaijani Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Secretary-General of the Azerbaijani National Commission to UNESCO. Prior to his diplomatic career, Ambassador Isgandarov spent time at the Azerbaijani Ministry of National Security, where he was Azerbaijani Deputy National Security Minister and Head of Information and Analysis. TEAS caught up with him in his Brussels office to find out more:

### How would you describe the current state of EU–Azerbaijani relations?

The relations between Azerbaijan and EU should be based on pragmatism, equality, and strategy. However, we cannot be satisfied with the current level of EU–Azerbaijani political dialogue, despite all the achievements – we believe there are great opportunities for the development of a truly strategic partnership based on sound, mutually beneficial, political and economic pillars of co-operation.

We are currently working on the development of such dialogue, and hope that the tolerant, secular, peaceful model of Azerbaijan can attract the EU, not only due to its energy potential, but also because of the importance of building a stable, peaceful neighbourhood in the region. We are witnessing an increase in attention on the part of our EU partners regarding the Armenian–Azerbaijani conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh. We also see that the EU is becoming increasingly concerned about recent developments in the region. The extent of success in our relations is also determined by the ability of our EU partners to filter and dismiss extraneous factors that are unrelated to the strengthening of Azerbaijani–EU strategic dialogue. If Azerbaijan interacts with Europe on the Southern Corridor and other significant projects, this is indicative of the high level of mutually beneficial relations. We believe that EU needs a strong, independent partner in the region, and Azerbaijan is the country that can successfully provide this.

### Do you believe that the recent statement by José Manuel Barroso, Former President, European Commission, delivered at the Azerbaijan Diplomatic Academy in Baku, signals that the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict has crept further up the EU agenda?

The Armenian–Azerbaijani conflict in and around the Nagorno-Karabakh region of Azerbaijan is a serious threat to peace and security in the EU Eastern Partnership area. It represents a severe impediment to the development of the wider region, and undermines the process of regional integration. As it is interested in maintaining the security, stability and prosperity of the Eastern Partnership, the EU keeps the conflict settlement issue high on its foreign policy agenda. This was recently reiterated during Former President Barroso's statement at the Azerbaijan Diplomatic Academy.

The most important element is that the EU should adopt a common principled position towards achieving settlement of protracted conflicts in the EU Eastern Partnership region. In fact, the adoption of a partisan approach in the policy towards resolution of such conflicts would undermine the credibility and reputation of the EU. The norms and principles of international law constitute the only basis and framework for rapid resolution of such conflicts. The final declaration of the EU Eastern Partnership Summit outlined the general position of the EU and partner states



Ambassador Isgandarov is striving to increase understanding of his nation in Brussels and across Europe

towards settlement of the conflicts in the Eastern Partnership area, including the Armenian–Azerbaijani conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh. We believe that the forthcoming Riga Summit in May 2015 will provide an opportunity to give a more concrete and clear message to those states violating the principles of international law, sovereignty and territorial integrity at the expense of a neighbour – a similar message was also expounded at the recent NATO Summit in Newport, Wales.

### How effective is the EU-funded *European Partnership for the Peaceful Settlement of the Conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh (EPNK)* that aims to develop dialogue via NGO contacts?

I wish to stress that, in the context of the Armenian–Azerbaijani Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, confidence-building measures (CBM) should contribute towards conflict resolution, rather than consolidating the status quo in the occupied territories. These should serve to overcome the consequences of the conflict and the reintegration of the territories within the state in which they belong. This was the exact message that we gave to the EU side when the EPNK project was launched in 2009.

The projects undertaken in the framework of the EPNK also aim to



establish dialogue between the Azerbaijani and Armenian communities of the Nagorno-Karabakh region of Azerbaijan. I believe this could facilitate the reintegration of the Nagorno-Karabakh region back into Azerbaijan. The effectiveness of the EPNK in establishing this dialogue is another question, as the Armenian side is hampering the contacts between the two communities, even at NGO level.



Ambassador Isgandarov stood alongside Lionel Zetter, Director, TEAS, at a networking event to welcome Azerbaijani students and young professionals living in Brussels (Photo: Gleamlight)

Nevertheless, our efforts towards bringing the both the Armenian and the Azerbaijani communities of the region together should continue. Following settlement of the conflict, these people will live together, as was previously the case.

**Do you believe the developing relevance of Azerbaijan to the EU, due to construction of the Southern Corridor, is increasing understanding of the country and its geopolitical challenges?**

Azerbaijan is a significantly strategic partner for the EU in the energy sector; as it is initiating and implementing multi-billion dollar equity, investment, energy and infrastructure projects in the region. Our projects do not come at the expense of political or financial bottlenecks for the EU. Azerbaijan is promoting these difficult projects at the expense of its own sovereign and independent foreign policy and energy development strategy. The country is also helping EU companies unlock the full potential of the Caspian Sea basin by creating a stable, predictable, and transparent investment climate. Our investment and fiscal regimes rank amongst the most investor-friendly in the world. The Southern Corridor is only in the nascent stages of its development – its objective is to initially bring 10bn m<sup>3</sup> (bcm) of natural gas to the European market. The EU will subsequently benefit from the addition of a new supplier to its energy stream.

Fortunately, there are untapped and unexplored gas and gas condensate fields in Azerbaijan, which could potentially feed the Southern Corridor with additional volumes in the long run. In conjunction with our partners in the EU, we are looking at long-term scenarios whereby Azerbaijan

could be transformed into an even greater supplier of natural gas to Europe. Let me emphasise that Azerbaijan does not build political projects – it is placing value on commercially sound projects that are win-win scenarios. Azerbaijan does not compete with anyone for the EU market, but instead seeks to optimise the value of its own trade opportunities.

**How are Belgian and Azerbaijani businesses currently collaborating, and how can this further develop?**

Azerbaijan and Belgium are currently collaborating in several areas, of which bilateral trade is the most important. Trade turnover between the two countries in 2013 amounted to €57.4m (£45m), which amounted to an increase of 26.7 per cent over the previous year. During the first half of 2014, turnover equated to €38.3m (£30m). The bilateral trade mainly comprised Belgian goods, such as petrochemicals and various distillates; telephonic devices; components for audio-video receivers and transmitters; construction machinery and equipment; and chemicals and medicines. This tendency is positive, but there is great potential for further co-operation, and more impressive results can be achieved.

Azerbaijan and Belgium can collaborate in a range of prospective areas, such as research and development (R&D); advanced technologies, particularly in the agricultural sector; water management; high-end construction; healthcare, including oncology, medical equipment, socio-medical insurance, and pharmacology; alternative and renewable energy production; port infrastructure; and logistics. The two nations are already collaborating in some of these areas. The Belgian Besix company is already successfully operating and is undertaking large-scale construction projects in Azerbaijan. A hospital is currently being built in Baku, which will employ up to 60 Belgian specialists, and ties between the city of Lommel and the Imishli region of Azerbaijan have been established, demonstrating the extent of further co-operation in the alternative energy

production field. Azerbaijani-Belgian co-operation is extending, and there are many opportunities to further extend this collaboration.



Ambassador Isgandarov outlined his country's Europe-facing stance during the *Business Forum Belgium-Azerbaijan*, organised by TEAS (Photo: Gleamlight)

**What do you see as the benefits of the recent *Business Forum Brussels-Azerbaijan*?**

The presence of the Belgian Foreign Ministry officials was indicative of the interest and will of the Belgian side in the process. I believe this forum helped explore the business and investment opportunities in Azerbaijan, in addition to spotlighting those areas that had not previously been in focus. It will also attract entrepreneurs from small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) who may be able to collaborate in the future. In any country, SMEs play an integral role in developing a healthy and competitive business environment.

I greatly appreciate the work of TEAS in organising the *Business Forum Belgium-Azerbaijan*, and hope this initiative will be further expanded.



Ambassador Isgandarov spoke passionately about the ongoing plight of the 875,000 Azerbaijani internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees during a European Parliament roundtable to commemorate World Refugee Day, organised by TEAS and the Association of Young Azerbaijani Professionals in Europe (AYAPE)



## Nagorno-Karabakh in the spotlight – the situation at year-end



(far right) Jacques Faure, Former French Co-Chair, OSCE Minsk Group, poses for a group photo in Paris in 2012 alongside (from left) Andrzej Kasprzyk, Personal Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office; Igor Popov, Russian Co-Chair, OSCE Minsk Group; Edward Nalbandian, Armenian Foreign Minister; Elmar Mammadyarov, Azerbaijani Foreign Minister and Robert Bradtke, Former US Co-Chair, OSCE Minsk Group (Photo: French Ministry of Foreign Affairs/Julien Faure)

The year 2014 was one of great volatility in the Armenian–Azerbaijani conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh. Two decades on from the ceasefire, tensions escalated to a new level during the summer, with over 30 casualties on both sides. Three meetings took place between Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev and his Armenian counterpart Serzh Sargsyan in Sochi, Newport and Paris. However, just as the Paris summit concluded in November – regarded by commentators as positive – Armenia conducted military exercises in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan. During these, two military helicopters threatened Azerbaijani forces defending the ‘contact line’, and one was shot down.

At this time of heightened tension, it was therefore appropriate that a roundtable entitled *The Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict – The Uses and Misuses of History* was organised on 26 November by the University of Birmingham Research Group on the Caucasus in collaboration with the Centre for Russian, European and Eurasian Studies and the Department of Political Science and International Studies. This provided the opportunity for TEAS to gauge the opinions of two experts on the region – Ambassador Jacques Faure (JF), former French Co-Chair, OSCE Minsk Group and Dr Kamala Imranli-Lowe (KL),

Research Fellow, Centre for Russian, European and Eurasian Studies, University of Birmingham.

**On 12 November, an Armenian helicopter was shot down over Nagorno-Karabakh by Azerbaijani forces. Almost immediately, Azerbaijan declared a no-flight zone over the region and President Sargsyan flew by helicopter into the airport in Khojaly, which was recently reopened amidst controversy. What are the ramifications of these acts?**

**JF:** Well, firstly, it’s difficult to assess, because I haven’t been on the spot. I know that OSCE teams are doing their best to investigate and get a proper explanation on what has happened. Secondly, it is difficult to understand the rationale behind these huge-scale Armenian military *manoeuvres*, especially following the Paris Summit, which was quite successful. Thirdly, there appears to be a lack of concern regarding the loss of human life, regardless of the number of deaths.

**KL:** In my opinion, such an incident was expected and it happened. This will be the case as long as this occupation continues, as long as there is a notion like a ‘contact line’ within the internationally-recognised borders of Azerbaijan, and as long as

Armenia holds military exercises within the internationally-recognised borders of Azerbaijan. In order to avoid this, the international community should be more active and be on the side of justice, rather than justify the separatism. There should not be any justification for the occupation of another country’s territories. As a historian, this is a moral issue for me. The principle that I follow in relation to any conflict, be it in Azerbaijan or other countries, is to maintain respect for territorial integrity and the fixed, internationally-recognised borders of all countries. I suggest that efforts should be made to withdraw Armenian occupying forces from the Azerbaijani territories. Only then can we can talk about peace, otherwise more casualties are unavoidable.

With regard to the assumptions that the shooting down of the Armenian helicopter may justify the Armenian consideration of the area between the ‘contact line’ and Nagorno-Karabakh as a ‘security zone’, the very notion of the ‘security zone’ is a politically-motivated construct. The conflict is unrelated to the security concerns of the Armenians, as the peaceful co-existence of Armenians and Azerbaijanis over a long period before Armenia made territorial claims on Azerbaijan and then occupied Azerbaijani territories demonstrated.



Azerbaijan shot down the Armenian military helicopter over its internationally-recognised air space – this contained three pilots from Armenia – not Armenian civilians from Nagorno-Karabakh. If the root causes of the issue – Armenian territorial claims and occupation – are not tackled, the conflict will continue.

**JF:** The return of the occupied territories remains part of the peace proposals, and that is clear to all. We all have to be extremely cautious because we are discussing matters that are very important for human lives on both sides. I still believe that politicians in both countries still intend to solve this conflict by peaceful, negotiated means. However, this is made very difficult when there are deadly incidents. The OSCE Minsk Group has proposed peaceful means for the solution, but we must also deal with situations that have been transformed by the warfare; by the ethnic cleansing; and by peoples being displaced from their homeland, etc. This is a tragedy for human beings. We also have a different *de facto* situation, which is the occupation of the seven districts around Nagorno-Karabakh.

It may be very difficult for the Azerbaijani side, and I understand this, to consider that evacuation of the occupied territories could be a bargaining chip for something else. However, if Azerbaijan genuinely wants to go, in good faith, towards a peaceful settlement, it implies that every side is involved and the necessity for compromises. Without this approach, it will be difficult to achieve a peaceful, negotiated settlement.

**KL:** I disagree with the terminology that you use when you say ‘Nagorno-Karabakh and the occupied territories of Azerbaijan’, as if they are separate, because Nagorno-Karabakh is also an Azerbaijani territory under Armenian occupation. Azerbaijan has offered the region of Nagorno-Karabakh a high level of autonomy within Azerbaijan. In my view, territorial autonomy is never a solution to any conflict, but instead lays the foundations for future conflicts. In fact, the status of territorial autonomy granted to Nagorno-Karabakh on 7 July 1923, following the Kavburo decision of 5 July 1921, whilst not granting the same autonomy to Azerbaijanis living in Armenia, remains the basis of the current stage of the conflict.

In order to avoid future conflicts, I support the idea of cultural – not territorial – autonomy.

**JF:** Some Armenians already understand



(from left) Ambassador Jacques Faure, former French Co-Chair, OSCE Minsk Group speaks to Neil Watson, Editor and Press Officer, TEAS (Photo: Leyla Qasimova)

that, unless they move towards a negotiated peaceful solution, they will risk their state and their population with more violent actions. If the situation continues for 10 or 20 more years, a solution is impossible. On all sides, politicians need to decide that the time is right to try to speak to their populations about the elements that would possibly lead towards a peaceful solution. However, I understand that they do not consider that this is that moment, but in the future they should definitely consider such compromises. Maybe I am being overly optimistic, but I think they are very conscious of this situation.

**This year has been particularly bad, with between 30 and 70 servicemen being killed on the ‘contact line’ from 27 July–6 August. Why do you think it happened this year?**

**JF:** There is a human factor. When you have a contact line separating two different armies by 300–500m, with both armies using the most modern available armaments, including long-distance rifles, casualties are unavoidable. I have visited the ‘contact line’ many times with the other OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs, and can understand how this happens. When night falls, and you see the soldiers’ faces – particularly those who are posted on duty at night – the look on their faces speaks for itself. You understand that they are scared, and when any incident occurs, guns are fired. It’s not logical, human, or good, but the situation may result in many casualties and losses of human life. This should be a strong argument for the leaders to seriously pursue a policy of negotiations.

**The year has also seen three meetings between the Azerbaijani and Armenian Presidents in Sochi, as an immediate reaction to the summer clashes, and then in Newport and Paris. Do you believe these meetings have helped reduce suspicion and increase understanding, despite the subsequent helicopter incident?**

**JF:** I believe these meetings were ultimately positive, although this is really a question for the two Presidents. I hope and believe that the outcome of the recent incident will be the opportunity for tête-à-tête talks. Their recent dialogue has assisted in developing perceptions of their opposite numbers and their position in relation to the conflict. They have a great responsibility for leading their people towards progress and a better future.

**What can the EU and UN do to end the conflict?**

**JF:** This is also a question for the leaders of the conflicting sides. What are their expectations? From what I understand the sides are committed to working within the OSCE Minsk Group format and they hope this will produce positive results. The OSCE Minsk Group has a mandate and mission to fulfill, and we are doing our best to achieve this whilst in direct contact with both Heads of State. With regard to UN proposals for the peace settlement, there is, of course, the need for some international peacekeeping operation, force or something of that nature. This would be necessary to help the conflicting sides trust each other better – this trust does not otherwise exist to a sufficient extent.



The lack of maintenance to the Sarsang Reservoir by Armenian forces over more than two decades represents a very real risk to the lives of hundreds of people

## PACE rapporteur visits dangerously neglected reservoir in the occupied territories

A fact-finding mission led by Milica Markovic, Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) rapporteur, has visited the Terter region of Azerbaijan to prepare a report on how Azerbaijanis on the ‘contact line’ are being deliberately deprived of water by the occupying Armenian forces. The delegation was received by the Terter

Executive Authorities and informed about the situation, particularly in relation to the Sarsang Reservoir, located in the occupied territories.

This reservoir includes a dam, built in 1976, across the Terter River. Since the occupation of Terter more than 20 years

ago, this has not received essential maintenance or checks. Analysts from the Su-Yapi, Chartis and Turkish Water Department have estimated that failure or sabotage could result in a 65m-wall of water. Travelling at 100–220km/h, this has the potential to swamp 20 villages, causing massive loss of life.

## UK Europe Minister meets French

### OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chair

David Lidington MP, UK Minister for Europe, has met Pierre Andrieu, French OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chair, in London. During the exchange, Lidington expressed the willingness of the UK to assist in accelerating conclusion of the Armenian–Azerbaijani conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh, noting the importance of resolving the conflict within the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan.



Much common ground was found in the discussions between Pierre Andrieu, French OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chair (left) and David Lidington MP, UK Minister for Europe

## Foreign Minister meets OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs in Basel

On the sidelines of the OSCE Ministerial Council in Basel, Elmar Mammadyarov, Azerbaijani Foreign Minister, met the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs Igor Popov (Russia), James Warlick (US) and Pierre Andrieu (France), together with Andrzej Kasprzyk, Personal Representative, OSCE Chairperson-in-Office.

The sides discussed negotiations regarding the settlement of the Armenian–Azerbaijani conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh and the plans and proposals of the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs for the forthcoming year. Mr Mammadyarov reiterated calls for the withdrawal of Armenian armed forces from the occupied Azerbaijani territories as the first step towards peaceful conflict resolution.



Discussions in Basel between (from left) Pierre Andrieu, James Warlick, Andrzej Kasprzyk, Elmar Mammadyarov, and Igor Popov

## Azerbaijan’s IDP crisis and right to return cited in new UK Government FCO report

In an unprecedented move, a new report from the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), entitled *Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in the South Caucasus – the numbers game*, has acknowledged: “Azerbaijan is host to one of the largest populations of displaced persons in the world in per capita terms.” The report analyses the seismic population shifts that have taken place in Azerbaijan and Georgia since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, and the economic impact of this. It also speaks of the “enormous suffering and hardship” on those affected.

Recognising that these people are the ongoing victims of the Armenian–Azerbaijani conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh, it concludes by stating: “The right of refugees and IDPs to return to their homes is central to Baku’s vision for restoring their territorial integrity – and in principle, this is supported by the international

community as a necessary element of any long-term settlement.”

The FCO report goes on to provide support for the Azerbaijani official figure of “around a million IDPs and refugees”, citing that the Azerbaijani figure is slightly above that of the UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), and that the UNHCR fails to take into account the estimated quarter of a million Azerbaijanis who fled Armenia at the height of the conflict in the early 1990s.

The FCO findings also give credence to calls for UN World Refugee Day on 20 June – based on a definition decided after World War II – to be redesignated as UN World Refugee and IDP Day. This is supported by the *Many Happy Returns* campaign, and there is the chance to pledge your support at [www.manyhappyreturnsidp.com](http://www.manyhappyreturnsidp.com). To date, 24 UK MPs have pledged their backing for the campaign and provided supportive messages.



## Filiz Ozcan uncovers an Azerbaijani classic

Filiz Ozcan is a theatrical and festival director, and a member of the World Arts Platform Artists' Advisory Group. She works for the Pegasus Theatre, and is one of the founding members of the Komola Collective. Amongst other productions, she has directed *Birangona: Women of War*, focusing on female survivors of the 1971 Bangladeshi–Pakistani war, which toured the UK and will soon tour Bangladesh.

Most recently, Filiz has turned to directing a modern Azerbaijani classic from 1963 entitled *You're Always With Me* by Ilyas Afandiyev, in an English translation by Sanan Aliyev. Produced by ALOFF Theatre for the first time outside Azerbaijan at the Lost Theatre in London, the two-week run was sponsored by the Azerbaijani Ministry of Culture and Tourism in celebration of the centenary of the author.

The play had an intriguing and controversial premise, focusing on the relationship between a lonely widower factory owner, named Hesenzadeh (Doug Devaney) and Nargile (Stephanie Harte), a teenage girl who has effectively been thrown out of her home by her stepfather. Reviewer Terry Eastham commented: "Ultimately the success of this show comes down to the writing and performing, neither of which could be faulted. Forget everything you think you know about Soviet-era writers, go see the real thing and be as amazed as I was." TEAS caught up with Filiz to find out more:

### How did you first come across *You're Always With Me*?

Sanan watched my previous show *Birangona: Women of War*, which was also at the Lost Theatre. He approached me and asked if I would direct the piece.

### What aspects of the play inspired you to direct the production? Did your Turkish heritage assist with interpreting the piece?

The play has a strong theme of loneliness, and features the very strong female character of Nargile, who stands up for her beliefs, and this drew me to the piece. My Turkish background had an impact on my understanding of the play, especially regarding the social and cultural references. Another main theme is the importance of societal expectations versus the needs of the individual.

### Why was the play controversial when it was first performed in 1963?

In his play, Ilyas Afandiyev has pitted the



A cross-generational friendship is forged between Hesenzadeh (Doug Devaney) and Nargile (Stephanie Harte)

propagation of the seeds of individualism against the communist beliefs of working towards a common goal. After watching the show, viewers ask themselves whether we should work towards a common goal, or stand up for what we believe in and follow our desires.

### Has the play been widely performed in Azerbaijan, and did you view any of the previous filmed or videotaped performances?

I viewed a videoed stage performance and feature film of the play for research purposes, and this helped me understand different approaches to the characters.

### What shaped your approach to the set design?

The action of the play takes place in several locations, ranging from a train station to a flat and factory office. I worked very closely with Paulina Rzeszowska, the set designer, in developing these spaces so they can be transformed into another performance space in a quick and efficient manner, such as the dining room that is transformed into an office in the second half of the play. The Lost Theatre has several entrances to the performance space, together with a balcony, and this enabled the furnishings to be configured in order to simultaneously create several settings within one space.

### How did you develop the staging concepts?

The opening at the railway station is a movement piece to create a world of separation and reunion that reinforces the themes of letting someone you love depart, or being reunited with a loved one. This is the reason we return to the whistle of the train at the end as Hesenzadeh leaves and Nargile is reunited with her mother.

### How did you cast the play?

Casting took place after spending an entire day working with actors on specific scenes from the play. My objective was to develop

the right kind of relationships between the actors and to tell the story effectively.

### Did you make a deliberate attempt to downplay the Azerbaijani elements of the play, making it less time- and place-sensitive?

The aim was not to downplay the Azerbaijani elements, but to focus on the relationships between the characters, as this is the aspect that engages the audience and takes them on a journey. However, the recorded music used in the play gives a taste of the Azerbaijani world. The use of music by Rashid Behbudov was essential, as he inspired Ilyas Afandiyev to create the character of Rashid in the play.



Drama ensues when Hesenzadeh places Nargile in his factory, overseen by the tyrannical Badal (Karl Niklas)

### How is the play analogous to the Soviet regime in Azerbaijan?

My interpretation of the Soviet analogies was that the character of Hesenzadeh represents communist ideology and Nargile and Surkik represent the questioning of these ideologies by youth. On the other hand, Nargile's mother Nazaket represents traditional Azerbaijani culture.

### What is the relevance of the play to a contemporary audience?

The play explores the mother-and-daughter relationship and a young person falling in love with an older person, rebelling against the expectations of society. These aspects are all current and relevant to today.

For more information, visit ALOFF Theatre at [www.alofftheatre.org](http://www.alofftheatre.org)

## Marc Verwilghen – Director of TEAS Belgium

The most recent addition to the TEAS team is Marc Verwilghen, who has recently been appointed as Director of TEAS Belgium. A lawyer by training, he ascended to the bar in 1975 and worked in Dendermonde, Bruges and in Ghent. After initially becoming involved in the Liberal Party at local government level, he came to the Belgian Parliament as a Deputy Member in 1991. He entered the Committee of Justice and became President of this Committee in 1995. A year later, he became President of the Parliamentary Inquiry Committee around the serial-killer Marc Dutroux, and thereafter became Minister of Justice.

In 1999, the Liberal Party achieved success in the elections and Marc simultaneously became a Senator. However, Marc never sat in the Senate during the following eight and a half years. He became Belgian Minister of Co-operation Development, focusing on the former Belgian colonies. Marc then became Minister of Economy, Energy, Foreign Trade and Science Policy, remaining in this position for three years. Altogether, his ministerial career lasted for eight and half years, after which he was re-elected as a Senator and became Vice-President of the Belgian Senate before leaving politics and returning to the bar. TEAS caught up with Marc in London:

### What is your previous experience of the post-Soviet world and the South Caucasus?

My main experience was as Vice-President of the Belgian Senate, during which I visited Baku in 2011 at the invitation of the Milli Majlis to celebrate the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Azerbaijani independence. I met Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev a couple of times and numerous MPs and Ministers to discuss energy issues. I was absolutely delighted by life in Baku, as it was very unusual to view a country that has achieved enormous steps within a very short time. The standard of living is comparable with that found in other developed European countries. I am very much looking forward to returning to Baku to undertake work on behalf of TEAS and the Azerbaijani people – particularly the refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) from Nagorno-Karabakh and the seven surrounding regions – I regard TEAS' primary focus being the general interests of the Azerbaijani people.

### What attracted you to apply for the role as Director of TEAS Belgium?

My initial impression was that the role had many connections with my previous positions. When I was Belgian Minister of Justice, the Prime Minister suggested that I should be a candidate for an important



Veteran Belgian politician Marc Verwilghen will lead TEAS Belgium as Azerbaijan comes closer to the European family of nations

position at the UN High Commission for Refugees, and I was placed amongst three shortlisted names. During my term as Minister of the Economy, there was a request to stand for election as European Commissioner for Human Rights. I belonged to a Liberal group in Europe that was aligned with other groups across the world, particularly in terms of human rights, and thus many of the basic concepts of TEAS reflect my own views.

When I was Minister of Co-operation and Development I learned a great deal about how to develop countries. I had been astonished by the transformation of Baku, but I knew that further development is only possible if the peoples of Europe meet and understand Azerbaijan and vice-versa. Again, I see this as the main objective of TEAS. After obtaining more information about Azerbaijan, I decided to apply and take on this challenge.

### Do you feel that the construction of the Southern Energy Corridor is providing a greater incentive for the EU to understand and resolve the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh?

This is often mistakenly referred to as a 'frozen' conflict, because it is seldom spoken about in the EU. Unfortunately, it is

often displaced from the consciousness of the world, as there are other places where tensions are higher, and they receive greater media scrutiny. We now have a new group of leaders in the European Parliament, and they need to be reminded about this conflict. It is also necessary to combine the information about the victims of the conflict – the refugees and IDPs – with business matters that attract collaboration. Hopefully the Southern Corridor will revitalise the connection between the EU and Azerbaijan.

### The OSCE Minsk Group has been trying to negotiate peace for 20 years, with little success. The Azerbaijani side often says that the EU should sit on the OSCE Minsk Group to change its balance. What is your view on this?

I consider Europe to have been too weak on this issue, and believe they should have shown more interest in achieving a negotiated peace via the OSCE Minsk Group. Despite the fact that the UN Security Council has passed four resolutions against the Armenian occupation, the EU has done very little to resolve the issue. The EU needs to take a new stance on the issue and adopt a stronger, more clarified, position. Obviously, I am aware that some of the countries are more in favour of the Azerbaijani position than others. However,





During his time as a Belgian minister, Marc gained expert knowledge of energy, foreign trade and the economic development of countries



Marc visited Baku in 2011 whilst in the role of Vice-President of the Belgian Senate

if the wording of the UN Security Council resolutions is analysed, no discussion is possible.

### How strong is the Armenian lobby in Belgium, and what potential is there for Belgian–Azerbaijani collaboration?

There is not an Armenian lobby in Belgium similar to that of France, for example. In fact, there are a relatively small number of Azerbaijanis and Armenians in the country, which bears some relationship to Belgium, with approximately 10m inhabitants. Azerbaijan has a well-developed energy sector, whereas Belgium is developed in terms of banking and finance, so the economies are complementary. It is perfectly possible for industry and political leaders from both countries to reach each other and share common projects.

It is imperative for the Belgian population to understand what has previously taken place in Azerbaijan and to recognise that the Armenian–Azerbaijani conflict has resulted in around 875,000 refugees and IDPs. This means that almost ten per cent of the Azerbaijani population is unable to return home.

I also want to organise a trade mission from Belgium to Azerbaijan, and believe the country should soon become the focus of the Europalia International Arts Festival, which takes place in various Central European locations and was, for example,

concentrating on Turkey in the past. I think that Azerbaijan has much more to offer than Turkey, and this could prompt Belgians to visit Azerbaijan, explore its tourism sector, and develop mutual understanding.

I really believe that a country located on a crossroads of mercantilism is relevant to Belgium and the whole of Europe. As the former Belgian Foreign Trade Minister, I believe that if I can co-organise an economic mission to Azerbaijan by Belgian captains of industry, and vice-versa, this would have a positive impact on perceptions of the country.

Furthermore, Belgian agriculture is very advanced, and we have some important agricultural institutes that could export their expertise for optimising crop yields, for example. Belgium is also central to the development of renewable energy, and has constructed the first offshore wind turbines. These now account for 20 per cent of Belgian electricity. Hydrocarbons are finite, as recognised by the Azerbaijani government, and there is great potential for renewable energy concepts to be constructed in the country. Baku is the city of winds and sun, and offshore wind turbines could certainly be constructed in the Caspian Sea, as well as photovoltaic parks.

### How would you describe the current EU–Azerbaijani relationship?

This has to be developed on both sides – I am surprised that Europe is not looking more closely at Azerbaijan, as the country is located in a uniquely geostrategic position. It is a neighbour of both Russia and Iran and is on the Silk Road. I believe that if the EU has a partner in this location that wishes to co-operate with Europe, they should take advantage of this decision. It is necessary for Europe to increase investments in Azerbaijan, and for the country to develop contacts in the western world, not just to resolve such political issues as the Armenian–Azerbaijani conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh, but because there are many business opportunities in relation to oil, gas, aluminium and other metals, agricultural products and carpets.

Azerbaijan is also potentially a gold mine for tourism. This sector should be developed, as there are many ancient cities, such as Lahic or Ganja, or in the Nagorno-Karabakh region, which I am sure will become a centre for tourism once the conflict is resolved.

I need to make it understood that, in the internationalised world, it is good to co-operate with neighbours, even if they are indirect. In fact, some matches in the UEFA European Championship are taking place in Baku. I am certain that, in the world of tomorrow, Baku will be much nearer to Europe and the EU than is currently the case.

## Business News: Charles Hendry discusses banking and energy in Baku

Charles Hendry MP, Prime Ministerial Trade Envoy to Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan, visited Baku for a series of meetings aimed at increasing co-operation between the Azerbaijani and British financial services and hydrocarbons sectors.

Speaking to Elman Rustamov, Head, Central Bank of Azerbaijan (CBA), he noted the ongoing development of UK–Azerbaijani economic ties; expressed satisfaction regarding the co-operation with CBA; and recognised the measures implemented by

the CBA to create a banking system that is commensurate with European standards. The sides discussed the macroeconomic situation and financial stability of Azerbaijan and the expansion of trade and investment opportunities between the two countries. Mr Rustamov explained that strengthening of the financial sector ranked amongst the top priorities of Azerbaijani economic policy.

Mr Hendry went on to exchange dialogue with Rovnag Abdullayev, CEO, State Oil

Company of the Azerbaijani Republic (SOCAR). Mr Abdullayev stressed his recognition of UK companies' role – particularly BP – in developing the Azerbaijani energy sector. He particularly cited the Southern Corridor, spearheaded by BP, which will bring Azerbaijani Caspian gas direct to Central Europe from 2020. During his time in Baku, Mr Hendry also visited the British stand at BakuTel, the premier International Telecommunications and Information Technologies Exhibition and Conference.

# iteca Caspian INTERNATIONAL EXHIBITIONS AND CONFERENCES IN AZERBAIJAN

## 2015



14<sup>th</sup> Azerbaijan International  
**TRAVEL AND TOURISM FAIR**  
2-4 APRIL [www.aitf.az](http://www.aitf.az)



9<sup>th</sup> Caucasus International  
**HOSPITALITY FAIR**  
2-4 APRIL [www.horex.az](http://www.horex.az)



2<sup>nd</sup> Caspian International  
**BOAT AND YACHT SHOW**  
2-4 APRIL [www.cibs.az](http://www.cibs.az)



14<sup>th</sup> International  
**TRANSPORT, TRANSIT AND  
LOGISTICS EXHIBITION**  
12-14 MAY [www.transcaspian.az](http://www.transcaspian.az)



5<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Caspian International  
**ROAD INFRASTRUCTURE AND  
PUBLIC TRANSPORT EXHIBITION**  
12-14 MAY [www.roadtraffic.az](http://www.roadtraffic.az)



21<sup>st</sup> Azerbaijan International  
**FOOD INDUSTRY EXHIBITION**  
21-23 MAY [www.worldfood.az](http://www.worldfood.az)



Caspian International  
**PACKAGING, TARE, LABEL AND  
PRINTING EXHIBITION**  
21-23 MAY [www.ipack.iteca.az](http://www.ipack.iteca.az)



22<sup>nd</sup> International  
**CASPIAN OIL AND GAS EXHIBITION**  
2-5 JUNE [www.caspianoilgas.az](http://www.caspianoilgas.az)



5<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Caspian International  
**POWER AND ALTERNATIVE ENERGY  
EXHIBITION**  
2-5 JUNE [www.caspianpower.az](http://www.caspianpower.az)



22<sup>nd</sup> International  
**CASPIAN OIL AND GAS CONFERENCE**  
3-4 JUNE [www.oilgasconference.az](http://www.oilgasconference.az)



21<sup>st</sup> Azerbaijan International  
**HEALTHCARE EXHIBITION**  
18-20 SEPTEMBER [www.bihe.az](http://www.bihe.az)



10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Azerbaijan International  
**STOMATOLOGY EXHIBITION**  
18-20 SEPTEMBER [www.stomatology.az](http://www.stomatology.az)



9<sup>th</sup> Azerbaijan International  
**BEAUTY AND AESTHETIC MEDICINE  
EXHIBITION**  
18-20 SEPTEMBER [www.beauty.iteca.az](http://www.beauty.iteca.az)



21<sup>st</sup> Azerbaijan International  
**CONSTRUCTION EXHIBITION**  
21-24 OCTOBER [www.bakubuild.az](http://www.bakubuild.az)



7<sup>th</sup> International Exhibition  
**FOR HEATING, VENTILATION,  
AIR-CONDITIONING, WATER SUPPLY,  
SANITARY, ENVIRONMENTAL  
TECHNOLOGY, SWIMMING POOL AND  
RENEWABLE ENERGIES**  
21-24 OCTOBER [www.aquatherm-baku.com](http://www.aquatherm-baku.com)



8<sup>th</sup> Caspian International  
**PROTECTION, SECURITY AND  
RESCUE EXHIBITION**  
21-24 OCTOBER [www.cips.az](http://www.cips.az)



21<sup>st</sup> Azerbaijan International  
**TELECOMMUNICATIONS AND  
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGIES  
EXHIBITION AND CONFERENCE**  
2-5 DECEMBER [www.bakutel.az](http://www.bakutel.az)

\*Dates are subject to change

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