ARMENIA WITHOUT ARMENIANS

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Prof. Z. S. Andrew Demirdjian, March 2011

The Involuntary Genocide

Prof. Demirdjian forwarded this article back in March, around the time that the Symposium dedicated to the topic of "Unity" was organized in Montreal. For whatever reason it had landed in the wrong folder of the e-mail. Our apologies to the dear professor for publishing it so late. **Keghart.com**

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For obvious reasons, I will not mention my friend’s name here. This benevolent man truly loved Armenia and the Armenians. In the year 2000, he gave up his fulfilling job, he gave up his moral support of a circle of friends and relatives, uprooted his loving family, and moved to Armenia from the United States (the true country’s name is changed) by leaving all the creature comforts behind. The main reason for his move was to help build the homeland after her independence. After having spent a tumultuous decade, he wrote to me a month ago that he was returning to the United States out of many personal reasons among which were the unwelcome attitudes and behaviors of a large segment of the population.
This friend has bemoaned the indifference, and even unpatriotic sentiments of the people who were born and raised in Armenia. If the natives could not withstand the hardship, how could the expats survive the austerity of life in Armenia including both the physical and the social-cultural environments? Therefore, he has forecasted that within a decade or so, Armenia would be

depopulated of its able-bodied citizens. Only the old and the disabled would remain there.

I received the news of his plans to return to the United States with a heavy heart. Here is a professional man who is highly educated, highly experienced, and above all someone out of sheer love came to his beloved homeland only to be disappointed by debilitating discrimination, deception, corruption and nepotism practiced almost on a daily basis.

In response to his sad decision, I chose not to try to persuade my friend again that he should not abandon ship because of the present difficulties in Armenia. I was afraid that he might question our friendship by asking him to remain in a hell-bound country. Of course, the homeland needed dedicated individuals like him who had come to Armenia to help rather than to fleece the people like some of the Armenian business men, consummate robber barons, doing shady business there in the name of helping their fellow countrymen.

Apparently, my friend has sent me the ArmeniaNow.com apocalyptic article as a proof of "I told you so that the country is going to the dogs!"

"Armenia without Armenians sounds like a sobering wake-up clarion, like a great title for a book. I wish I had the time to co-author it with you," I wrote back. "Simply to warn the Armenian world communities that unless drastic measures are taken, Armenia will be again depopulated this time by voluntary exodus to foreign lands as it was once during Stalin's years." Since Armenia's independence in 1991, over 1.1 million people have chosen to live in the Diaspora. Thousands and thousands of people leave Armenia annually in recent years to settle down permanently in foreign countries. Most of them end up going to Russia because of its proximity, lax immigration laws, and now on account of this devastating Russian program offering all the hard-to-pass incentives.

A book like this would cover the situation of our country in the near future because of the exodus and to expose how some of the selfish officials who look the other way as though they were blind. Not seeing the debilitating effect of emigration and especially the brain drain now in progress is the ultimate crime.

There is a saying in French: *il n'est pire aveugle que celui qui ne veut pas voir* (It translates to something like this: there is no worse of a blind person than the one who does not want to see).

The ArmeniaNow. com article is well written and somewhat long. In a nutshell, the author states that agents from Russia present seminars in different provinces of Armenia to explain the new program based on the Federal Migration Service of Russia. The enticements to immigrate into Russia consist of the government giving anywhere between $4,000 to $8,000 cash, plus transportation costs, plus job opportunities, and to crown all, the privilege of becoming a citizen of Russia within a matter of months!

The news of these highly attractive incentives is spreading like wildfire throughout the poverty stricken provinces of Armenia including the urban areas where the unemployment conditions are

very high. Despite the impending demographic disaster facing Armenia, some officials such as Mr. Gagik Yeganyan, the head of the Agency for Migration issues within the Ministry of Territorial Administration, has supposedly stated that Russia solves its labor shortage by collecting labor force from other countries just as Canada and New Zealand do. Therefore, Russia is following a normal policy. Granted, Russia's act would not be construed outrageous if it were to recruit its labor needs from overpopulated nations such as China or India. But Armenia is bleeding. The slightest drain of population for Armenia proves to be a double whammy condition: loss of population from Armenia to foreign lands and loss of Diaspora Armenians to assimilation. It is a lose-lose situation!

Some of the Armenian government officials are playing down the drain on the population by discounting it as being a normal policy practiced by all nations or that the drain is not massive to cause any alarm. This would be true if Armenia were a heavily populated nation. Even a small, but gradual decline in population would spell disaster over time for the survival of our culture.

However, there are other government officials such as Prime Minister Tigran Sargsyan who has courageously admitted the emigration issue as being worrisome. As a result, he had approved a special program which is directed at decreasing the emigration rates and by creating attractive conditions for the expats' repatriation. Although this move is an example of management by crisis rather than management by objectives, it is still a positive step in the right direction.

Repatriation is hardly a viable corrective action to remedy the situation because those who immigrate soon begin to grow deep roots in the Diaspora and would seldom want to return to their native land. The best approach would be a preventive policy which would make it attractive for the population to stay in their own homeland.

With due respect, our Big Brother Russia is helping us ease the slumping economy in Armenia, but the unintended consequences would be depleting its population. Why is Russia transplanting the Armenians into their outlying regions of the federation? Is it because they love the Armenians and want to help them? In addition to increase Russia's labor supply, a plausible answer would be to beef up its Christian population (since Russia is fast becoming the minority ethnic population in a sea of non-Christian ethnic people of the Russian Federation). If this were true, then it would be a selfish act of Russia in trying to solve its problems by creating a chaotic situation for the Armenians.

The Ottoman Turks dealt the Armenians telling blows of the Genocide in 1893-1896, again in 1909, and finally 1915-1923 --thereby depopulating our Western Armenia and Cilicia to a meager 50,000 Armenians now residing mainly in Istanbul. And now our benevolent Big Brother Russia is dealing us an "involuntary Genocide" for lack of a better term by causing the Armenian population exodus. We need to sound off our alarm and deep concerns to the Russian officials that the recently concocted immigration program will soon decimate the already dwindling population of the country. There is ample cause to rant and rave about this irresponsible program.

If the Diaspora were organized on a global scale, we could have stood up in unison through our

representatives around the world and tried to protect our rights even though no one is directly coercing Armenians to emigrate. The skeptics would say who would do that? We would say our young Armenians, who else --Spider-man, Bionic Woman, or our silent majority? On who else to rely other than on our young Armenians?! How long do we continue taking low blows like these whether malice is intended or unintended?

This reminds me of the story of the drunkard lying in the gutter. His face is full of cuts and covered with blood. His friend happens to be passing by and finds him there. He says: "Tom, what happened to you?"

Tom explains: "I had a couple of drinks and as I was leaving the bar, someone stepped on my foot. I said –Hey, watch where you're goin, fella!"

Tom continues: "The man said: Who says so? I replied to him: I says so! Then this big man picked me up and hit me smack on the nose. He hit me on my left cheek, he hit me on my right cheek, he hit me on my forehead, he hit me on my chin ---my knees buckled and I fell down. He gave me a blow on my head --had he given me another blow, I would have stood up and hit him back!"

We have lost our life-giving rivers, we have lost our majestic mountains, we have lost our colorful meadows, we have lost our lush valleys, we have lost our homes, we have lost our aunts and uncles, we have lost our country, we have almost lost our nation. What else do we lose before we stand up and fight back?!

Right now we are experiencing "another" Genocide. Granted, it is involuntary, but still a Genocide by our own alley in the north and by our own people who don't give a damn to what happens to our homeland. A homeland without its people is the sure way of losing it forever to those who are, like vultures, ready and willing to dive in and feed on the carcass of the Armenian nation. According to Mr. Appo Jabarian, the Executive Publisher and Managing Editor of the USA Armenian Life Magazine, what are some of our officials committing can be categorized as "Involuntary Patri-cide," *un acte commit par soi-même pour l'elimination de propre patrie* (The new term coined by him to mean patricide= act of elimination of one's own homeland!). And so, there we have it again our Armenian people between the rock and a hard place: "Involuntary Genocide" by our friendly neighbor and an "Involuntary Patricide" by our own officials!

Let us hope some concerned officials in Armenia such as our President Serzh Sargsyan and our Prime Minister Tigran Sargsyan and some of our leaders in the Diaspora will soon put a stop to this involuntary Genocide. Either love Armenia truly or do not claim yourself to be an Armenian when you witness the Genocide in progress and do not give a hoot about it.

As the Talmud says something to the effect that he who sees a crime being committed and does nothing to stop it is an accomplice to the act which is being perpetrated. I trust none of us will become an accomplice when such a devastating involuntary Genocide is unfolding before our own eyes. Essentially the phrase, "Armenia without Armenians" is meant as a wakeup call for emergency

action. Although "Armenia without Armenians" sounds also oxymoron, yet in its verbal sense has a sobering message to heed for without Armenians, Armenia would cease to exist, there won't be any Armenia any longer. Without Armenians, Armenia will create a vacuum, for non-Armenians to fill this much desired void by the neighboring people who have been lusting after the Armenian Highlands for thousands of years. . And I solemnly pray that our leaders in Armenia as well as in the Diaspora won't turn their heads in the opposite direction and pretend not to see the looming ethnic extinction on the horizon –however distant the doom may be in the future.