HOMEWARD JOURNEY TO W. ARMENIA THE RIGHT OF RETURN

Posted on May 5, 2020 by Keghart



Category: Opinions

"To venture upon an undertaking of any kind, even the most insignificant, is to sacrifice to envy".

Emil M. Cioran

Z. S. Andrew Demirdjian, Ph.D., Los Angeles, 28 April2020

According to scholars, philosophy is the mother of all sciences. Basically, it is a system of beliefs or values. Philosophers believe that people could use the powers of the mind and reason to understand natural events by finding answers to their questions and problems. Philosophers provide us with hypotheses (i.e., tentative assumptions) to test and retest until we find the truth objectively.

One of the first ancient philosophers, Thales, believed in the 600s B.C. that water was the basic material of the world. He thought that everything was made from it. Democritus, who lived in the 400s B.C., offered a different idea. He thought that everything was made of tiny particles he called atoms. More than 2,000 years later, scientists still use his ideas about atoms.

Let us come up with new or old ideas about regaining Western Armenia. Imperialism involves conquest. Armenia already faces a sworn enemy from the East, namely Azerbaijan, which does not only claim Nagorno Karabakh (Artsakh), but the whole of the Republic of Armenia as its historical territory. Beware, the hungry wolf is getting stronger and bolder by the day.

Furthermore, Armenia cannot afford to engage in war with Turkey by trying to regain Western Armenia through armed conflict. Turkey has the 4th largest army in the NATO organization and has a vast arsenal of modern weaponry.

As for irredentism, the politicians of the international community are against it for their own countries consist of different ethnic groups wanting justice, freedom and independence. They would blame Armenia for being irredentist, eager to add more territories despite the risk of destabilizing the region.

In fact, when the Armenian Diaspora is pushing for Western Armenia, it should not be construed as a case of irredentism. The Diaspora consists of nearly 90 percent of the displaced Armenians of the Genocide and their descendants. It would be the return of the exiled from their homeland and Mustafa Kemal refused to allow their return to their ancestral homeland. The international community should be cognizant of the fact that the heart of the Armenian Homeland has been occupied by the present-day Turkey and it should be liberated.

Most politicians play the pious role when it comes to other countries' claims to lost territories saying it is irredentism, but consider it patriotism when it comes to claim their own lands from another country. Double standard is the hallmark of most politicians.

So, what safe way to begin claiming Western Armenia without resorting to imperialism or

irredentism? We need to come up with an idea. Ideas have changed the world with the help of philosophy which ends up adding to the body of our knowledge in science and technology and in human morality and ethicality. Ideas do not have to be original, but somewhat operational.

Philosophy will provide us with tentative answers to questions. These answers would be scrutinized for validity. If rejected, then we come up with a replacement answers to the question. The critical question is how to keep the fire under our new generations for regaining Western Armenia? One safe suggestion would be through the law of Right of Return clause.

The worst thing the Armenian Diaspora can do is to remain inaction, do nothing until the ultimate break comes along. The risks of inaction cannot be overstated: by then, the quest for Western Armenia becomes just a tiny foot note in the consciousness of the world, let alone in the minds of our future generations. When there is a mountain to climb, we should not think that procrastinating will make it a hill.

Thus, let us try a plausible idea(s). If it does not work, then someone will come up with a better idea just like Thales idea of the world being made of water and then Democritus's better idea of the atom.

We need to enter Western Armenia somehow. The use of force (war) is out of question unless it is initiated by Russia for its own benefit.

The Right of Return is rather a peaceful way to get to Western Armenia. As a principle in international law, Right of Return guarantees everyone's right of voluntary return to or re-enter their country of origin or of citizenship.

A right of return could be based on nationality, citizenship, or ancestry that may be enshrined in the constitution or law of a country. Certain countries may reserve the right to deny a right of return in particular cases or in general.

The Right of Return is also formulated in some modern treaties and conventions, such as in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the 1966 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the 1948 Fourth Geneva Convention. It is worth noting that the Geneva Conventions have passed into customary international law and that the Right of Return is also binding on non-signatories to the conventions.

One idea is to get Turkey grant citizenship to the survivors of the Genocide and their descendants. An example of the Right of Return in case law is a Greek citizen wanting to go back to Northern Cyprus, occupied by Turkey in 1974.

In 1996, the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) ruled in a landmark case known as Loizidou v Turkey. A certain Mrs. Titina Loizidou was a Greek-Cypriot refugee displaced from Northern Cyprus and Turkey had prevented her from returning to her ancestral land. The court ruled that Turkey had violated Mrs. Loizidou's human rights, and that she should be permitted to return to her home and

that the government of Turkey should pay damages to her.

Some may claim that Mrs. Loizidou's case is a recent one, while the Armenian deportations took place over a century ago. The statute of limitation does not come into play when the case involves, deportations, forced exile, genocides, etc. of citizens or indigenous people of the perpetrator state.

The Portuguese parliament, for example, unanimously approved in 2013 a measure that allows the descendants of Jews expelled from Portugal in the 16th century to become Portuguese citizens.

Another example is the case of Sephardic Jews who were expelled from Spain in 1492. Despite the general rule for obtaining Spanish nationality after a residency of five years in Spain, the Royal Decree stated in 1924 that the Sephardic Jews can obtain Spanish nationality with two years of residence in Spain.

In 2015, however, the Spanish Parliament approved the 12/2015 Act, the Law Granting the nationality to Sephardic Jews and grants the Spanish nationality automatically to Sephardic Jews living abroad, provided they can prove that they are the descendants of the Sephardic Jews expelled in 1492.

Those Armenians who do nothing but criticize the ideas of others, may say how can we request citizenship when the events took place a century ago?

Well, it is possible for the Sephardic Jews have collectively worked on making Spain accept to grant citizenship to the descendants of Sephardic Jews who were expelled from Spain in 1492.

There are a number of international organizations which have formulated laws on repatriation of those people and their descendants who have been forcibly deported, expelled from their native lands.

A great lesson to learn: The Greeks came up with ideas and the Romans built upon them. Let us come up with ideas in order for our new generation to build upon them toward the realization of going home to our ancestral lands.

When the Islamized Armenians find out that the Armenian Diaspora has some presence in Turkey, they would be motivated to come out of the shadows or camouflage and join hands in advancing the Armenian Cause.

As you well know, the Diaspora is living on borrowed time and the jaws of assimilation are constantly wide open. No matter how many schools, churches, clubs we built the Diaspora's destiny will get into the melting pot. Time is of the essence. We need to take the bull by the horns. If at first we do not succeed, we try, try, and try again.

To recover from the shellshock of genocide, it takes years. Our parents had to struggle for survival in foreign lands, new languages, and different customs.

The first descendants of the genocide survivors had experienced firsthand the tears, the sorrows, the nostalgia, the yearning of their parents for their homeland, unjustly occupied by Turkey. Hence, patriotism, the love of county, is very strong in the minds and hearts of the descendants. Love of country is in their social genes.

Our subsequent generations will not have the benefit of having their grandparents around, the eye-witnesses, the embodiment of the Armenians born and savagely treated in their own country. As time goes by, the future generations will be less motivated by the idea of returning to Western Armenia.

Granted, the territorial nationalism of Turkey, based on the belief that all inhabitants of its territory should share a common national identity, regardless of their ethnic, linguistic, religious, cultural and other differences, would create a difficult environment, but obtaining citizenships through Right of Return would not necessitate anyone to put up with all that restrictions. You do not have to live there, but have the right to come and go as you would please for being a citizen. As time goes by, when we become numerous, our vote would count in the Turkish affairs of the state. Let us not forget, it is a journey, an odyssey, many generations will be able to join the homeward mission and vision for years to come.

Measures should be taken now not to fall into the abyss of oblivion, into making Western Armenia a footnote in the history of the Armenian people. Who speaks now of the once-thriving Armenian province of Urmyia in Iran? It is gone in the fog of history. It is better to dream the impossible dream, rather than feel paralyzed about getting back our lost lands, our ancestral Homeland before the Diaspora dissipates into the dominant culture of our second homes.

This picture represents the uncultivated, vast agricultural flat lands in the shadow of our iconic, if not majestic, Ararat, the symbol of Western Armenia in every "Hay's" mind and heart. Perhaps no one has grown anything on this land since the Ottoman Turks had usurped these precious lands from the Armenians. Just by looking at this awe inspiring scene, it would be easy to feel close to God, the Almighty, who would one day bless its return into the fold. If it is worth saving our Western Armenia Homeland from its present bondage, then we should get into gear to come up with inspiring idea(s) toward its eventual redemption.

There are no comments yet.