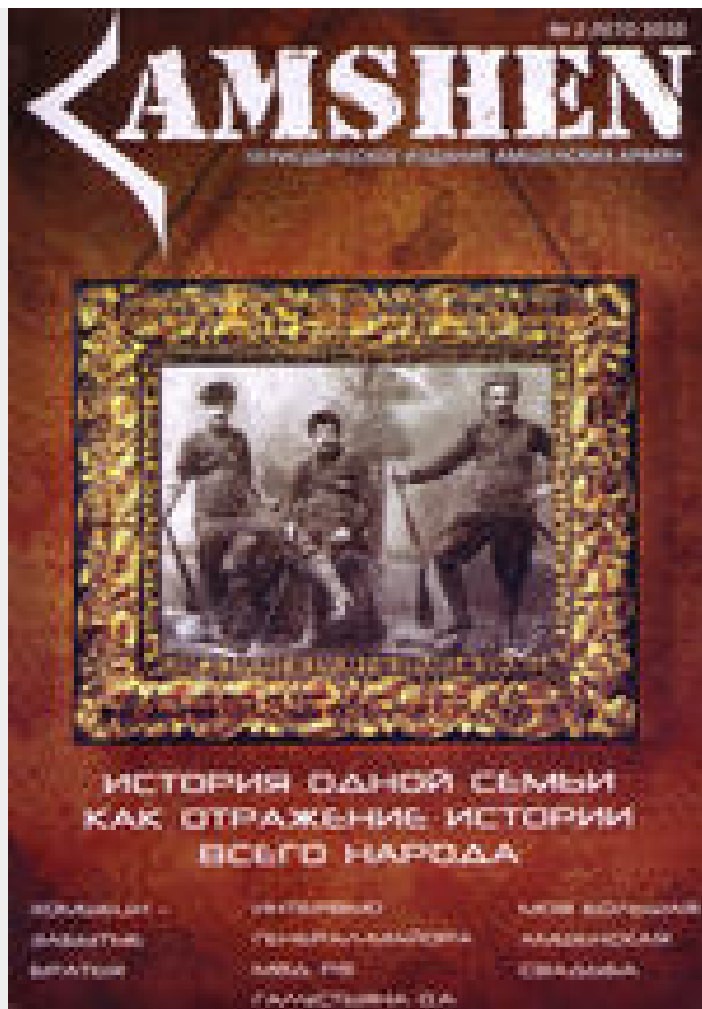


FROM MY DIARY

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Hamo Moskofian, Berlin-Frankfurt-Wiesbaden-Cologne-Beirut, November 2010



We Must Welcome Hamshens

During the recent preparatory conference of the proposed Western Armenian National Congress (WAN-C) in Sevres, we became friends with Black Sea Hamshen Armenian Prof. Sergey Kalendjian of Moscow. The conference also provided us with the opportunity to renew our friendship with Dr. Dikran Abrahamian of Toronto and his daughter Nayiri, and Aliye Alice Alt, the 'Mother' of Hamshen Armenians in Germany.

Prof. Kalendjian said, "My grandfather immigrated, with his family of nine children, to Sukhumi in Abkhazia in 1907. A mathematician, he became the coordinator of more than 32 Armenian schools around Sukhumi and Gagra in Soviet times when 125,000 Christian Hamshen Armenians lived in the area. Today there are more than 245,000 in Krasnodar, Tuapse, Lazarovskaya in the Black Sea region. We have a powerful Hamshen Armenian community in Moscow. We are trying to help our convert brothers in Kirgizistan and Uzbekistan to settle not only in Krasnodar, but in Armenia and Artsakh."

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During our second and recent meeting in Moscow, Prof. Kalendjian explained why there were convert Hamshens in Central Asia. "During the Second World War, Stalin ordered the deportation of Muslim Hamshen Armenians to Uzbekistan and Kirgizistan, from their villages near the Turkish

border...There they were called Hemshils (the language they spoke with hemshin-hemshilli Armenian accent). Many of them didn't even know that they were Armenian. In recent years a significant number of them have begun studying Armenian history, and have visited their brethren in Armenia and in Moscow. Some have also resettled near their Christian countrymen," said the Hamshen professor.

"I like them very much. They have a song called Nene ("Grandmother") which I heard many times in my childhood in Gagra. I will invite Hemshils to sing and dance at my son's wedding party," said Prof. Kalindjian.

Just before leaving Moscow, I connected by telephone Aliye Alice Alt of Germany to Prof. Kalendjian, who is fluent in German. They agreed to meet soon. The professor said "We must accept our converts back to our nation, wherever they are--in Germany, Turkey, Uzbekistan or Kirgizistan."

IOC Visits Armenian Communities in Germany and Lebanon

Following the latest WAN-IOC meeting in Sevres, where it was decided to contact Armenian Diaspora communities and invite them to send delegates to the 3rd Western Armenians Congress to take place in Sevres next year, two visits were organized to the "Forepost" of Convert-Islamized, Hamshen and Dersim Armenians in Germany and to the 'Capital' of the Armenian Diaspora--Beirut. On Nov. 10, the members of the delegation travelled to Berlin, headed by Suren Seraydarian, deputy-executive of IOC, and joined by organizational committee members Igor Zargarian and Artashes Shirikyan of Moscow. Berlin is the city which hosted the 1878 "Bismarckian" pro-Ottoman conference which scuttled the creation of Western Armenia, also where, in 1945, the victorious Soviet Armenian soldiers of the "Tamanyan Division" put their names on the walls of the Reichstag. The German capital is also the locale of the Steinplatz where Tal'at Pasha, the mastermind of the Armenian Genocide, was assassinated by heroic Soghomon Tehlirian. Today Turkish nationalists are trying to erect a monument at Steinplatz in honor of Tal'at, the butcher of Armenians, Assyrians, and Arameans during the First World War. But the Turkish efforts have, so far, been in vain, thanks to the efforts of Prof. Jirayr Kocharian of city's Frei ("Free") University and historian Thessa Hofmann--the German 'Daughter of the Armenian Nation' at her office in the university. Prof. Kocharian and Doktor Hofmann are leading activists for the recognition of the Armenian Genocide.

After discussing the possibilities of activating the Western Armenians Congress drive in Germany and arranging upcoming meetings with members of the German Bundestag through the assistance of Doktor Hofmann, the delegates visited the latter's office in the university. Doktor Hofmann, the author of a dozen books about the Armenian Genocide, analyzed current German state political attitudes concerning the Armenian Question, and advised the delegation to continue the struggle in diplomatic ways and by officially addressing the president of the Bundestag.

After a warm farewell, WAN-C delegates promised to return to Berlin for a longer stay and to follow

developments. The same evening, after a four-hour train trip, the group arrived in Frankfurt where it was welcomed by the legendary Zaza and Kizilbash musicians and activists Mikhail Aslan and Zafer Kucuk of Dersim. The musicians' recent patriotic concerts in Armenia and their famous "Petag" album have received tremendous reception among music lovers.

Soon after, the guests were joined by the 'Mother' of Hamshen Armenians of Germany--Aliye Alice Alt. Discussions about organizing Hamshens of Germany continued to the early hours of Nov. 11 in Wiesbaden, where they were joined by the sons of Alevi and Kurdified Armenians--Simon Gunden and Dikran Chatinkaya. Our "refound" Armenians, Zaza and Kizilbash brethren promised to help WAN-C in every way possible and to attend the 2011 Sevres Congress, if invited. Moreover, Mikhail Aslan promised, together with Vova Hamshen (a famous Hamshen Armenian singer and musician in Turkey) to organize a concert in Moscow soon.

Greatly impressed by the meeting with the convert Armenians and the warm hugs on the streets of Wiesbaden by their relatives, the delegation continued its trip to Cologne, to meet Archbishop Karekin Bekjian, the spiritual leader of Armenians of Germany. The Armenian cleric received the guests with great honours and promised assistance for the success of the group's mission and to organize a meeting with the leaders of the Armenian community in Germany. The delegates thanked the archbishop and promised to return to Germany in the near future.

Seraydaryan, Zargarian and Shirikyan returned to their home countries while historian Vahan Melikyan (Moscow), Hrayr Garabedian (Vienna), and Silva Yacoubian (Los Angeles) visited Beirut. There they met prominent members of the Armenian community and paid a visit to His Holiness Catholicos Aram I of the See of Cilicia, who promised to support the goals of the Western Armenian Congress by sending his representative to Sevres.

At the end of the Beirut meetings an agreement was reached to organize a series of preparatory monthly meetings by a local committee, while continuing comprehensive contacts with intellectual and patriot Mkrditch Bouldoukian.

Although a huge effort lies ahead in the coming months, the delegates agreed that firm steps have been taken which will be followed by other visits to guarantee the success of the 3rd Western Armenian Congress.

