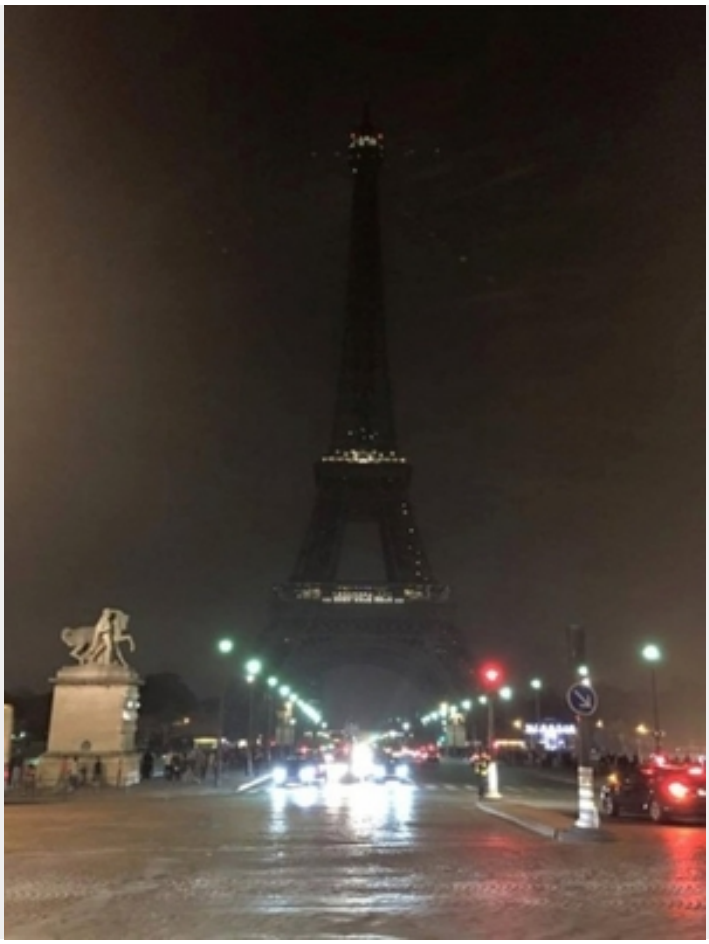
GENOCIDE COMMEMORATIONS IN PARIS

Posted on May 5, 2015 by Keghart



Category: Opinions

Glimpses by a participant

24 April 2015

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Television stations covered the event extensively, and aired Valls' remarks about the massacres of Christians in the Near East. A ceremony also took place at the Arc de Triomphe de l'Etoile, with Armenian-French veterans and scouts who then marched down the Champs-Elysées accompanied by a band, and joined the crowd. After that, everyone marched along the Seine, towards the Turkish Embassy.

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One could see many flags of Armenia and a few French ones. Virtually no flags of the other minorities who were eliminated during the genocide. It was a bright evening; the demonstrators were chatting, laughing, running this way and that. The young were, how shall we say?... really young. Hair cropped on the side, ears or brows pierced, pretty girls with quite a lot of makeup: trendy French youths, who did not seem to be mourning anyone, yet were devoting this Friday

evening to the Armenian cause, to ask for justice. The 24th was right in the middle of spring vacation, so we felt it was great they were spending their time there.

We had to follow a truck equipped with deafening loudspeakers which unfortunately refused to break down. A man was shouting into the microphone at the top of his voice, so much so that you got the impression his larynx would crack. He was urging the public to scream for the benefit of the inhabitants of that posh area, one surmised. The choice of the music was perplexing: No Gomidas; no requiem; no Divine liturgy, no Aznavour. Instead, modern music, including heavy metal or something similar. It couldn't have been meant to facilitate meditation, remembrance, prayer, let alone mourning. A friend said, "My murdered ancestors must have jumped and tossed in their mass graves, supposing they had the privilege of being thrown into a mass grave, of course." The atmosphere was one of demands (due to the slogans) and of a party (due to the music and the behavior of the young but also some of the less young). The Armenians are alive; that's probably part of the message. To remember the dead this April 24th, 2015, was quite a challenge, though.

Indeed, my friend and I were amazed at the number of young people and teenagers. They should be urged to study political science and law, in addition to carrying the "yerakuyn" energetically through

Paris. In 50 years the boys and girls who were so lively on April 24th in Paris will probably still be very vocal and active. Thus, we can bet one-and-a-half century after the crime, demands for justice will still be uttered. It is also likely that when they become parents in a few years, these kids will pass down what they know to the next generation. Turkey should consider the presence of masses of young Armenians as a warning, and so should the Holocaust deniers, the Hutu killers and their descendants, as well as others concerned by crimes against humanity, whether as victims or as perpetrators. Forgetting is not on the agenda.

Erdogan's threatening of the Pope caused negative impressions in France, a mainly Catholic country. Television also showed footage of the ceremony at Echmiadzin, and reported the genocide recognition by Austria, Germany as well as the positive vote of the EU Parliament. There were numerous articles in the press devoted to the Genocide, to its denial and to the "remains of the sword". This we certainly also owe to President Hollande's attending the commemoration in Yerevan and to the fact that quite a number of French celebrities have Armenian ancestry and do not conceal it, or do not conceal it anymore. The president's subsequent quick visit to Baku, however diplomatic it may have been, led to more media coverage and mentions of the Karabakh problem and the serious violations of human rights in Azerbaijan. Meanwhile, the French Defense minister was attending the ceremonies at Gallipoli, but there was very scarce coverage of that event.

Also, the Eiffel Tower's lights were turned off, which is absolutely exceptional. Reporters spoke about it, showed the unusual pictures of a dark Eiffel and that of the Coliseum in Rome which similarly went dark for the same reason.

A final note: the Turkish ambassador in Paris denied the genocide in a TV interview. He explained,

"There could not have been a genocide because the word didn't exist in 1915". In addition, he said, "all the facts that needed to be acknowledged have been duly acknowledged". By the same token, no French husband ever raped his wife until a law passed some years ago determined that marital rape existed and was a crime. There were no pedophiles until the 1960s when the word was coined here, and as others have pointed out, no Alzheimer patients before Dr. Alzheimer, and Jews and Gypsies were not submitted to genocide during WWII either since at the time the word was not in use, so it was not used during the Nuremberg trials. Too bad that the journalist did not reply, for uninformed viewers may have believed the Turkish ambassador.