CONCERT IN GERMANY CELEBRATES 'LOST AND FOUND' ARMENIANS

Posted on November 21, 2012 by Keghart

Category: Opinions

By Hamo Moskofian, Hanau, Germany, October 2012

On the historic day of September 28, 2012, commemorating the founding of the "lost and found" Dersim Armenians the "Belief & Social Aid" organization at the Hanau cultural center in Germany, we spoke with the two leading figures of the movement--Mihran Pirkich (Prkich) Gultekin and Hovsep Hayreni--and asked them what their aims were.

Mr. Pirkich said: "As a convert Armenian, living many years as a Muslim Turk or Kurd in Dersim and in Istanbul, I suddenly found that the son of the Armenian Boghos could not be a Turk Salattin. Through a complicated court decision in Turkey, we regained our Armenian Christian identity, re-established our rights to preserve our language, culture, beliefs, and the traditions on our land where we have lived for thousands of years. I must confess that the great martyr Hrant Dink was like an immortal lighthouse, with the newspaper 'Agos', during our struggle to return to our roots."

Historian and intellectual Hovsep Hayreni of Belgium, a devotee of the Dersim Armenian and Western Armenian cause, said: "Even after the 1915 Genocide with 1.5 million victims, the convert Armenians in Turkey number about one million today! Many have mixed Kurd, Alevi or Turk parentage. The convert Armenians' movement to return to their identity and roots is slow but a very important process, needing the aid of Diaspora Armenians and the state of Armenia. We are continuing our struggle through all types of difficulties, counting on the aid of our Dersim compatriots all over the world."

Armenian dance performed by Dersimi young girls in Hanau

It was no surprise that the concert was attended by the son of a convert Armenian--Archbishop Karekin Bekjian, the spiritual leader of the Armenians of Germany. There were guests from France, Holland, Belgium, Canada (represented by Dr. Dikran Abrahamian and wife Shirley), the U.S (represented by Hratch Kaprielian), Turkey, Lebanon, Iraq and, of course, from many cities and towns in Germany.

The highlight of the concert-meeting was Mikail Aslan and his group--Cemil Qoçgiri and Devrim Kavalli, who performed perfect renditions of Dersim Armenian songs, despite being Kurd-Alevi.

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