REGRETTABLE RETROGRESSION

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By **Henry D. Astarjian** MD, 4 June 2015

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Now, through the persistent, and exhaustive efforts of Armenians, a number of important states in the West have called the massive, planned, and deliberate extermination of a race, Genocide. They could have done that decades ago, but they didn't. Other geopolitical conditions, similar to the present, were a factor in their indifference, but that is off the limits of this writing, at this time.

Preparations for this display of Armenian solidarity had taken a long time, occupying the imagination of the youth and the elderly, thus deviating the energies and actions from vital subjects detrimental to the very existence of the Armenian Cause.

In cities and countries around the world the massive demonstrations, protests and seminars, lectures, and panel discussions, speeches and rallies were executed flawlessly. All incriminatory fingers were pointed towards Turkey, the occupier of the Ottoman Caliphate mantel.

In some areas carnival, and in others pseudo-carnival atmosphere prevailed. Armenians of every faith, denomination, and political affiliation, inebriated with what is considered to be a victory over Turkey, celebrated the Genocide Centenary with variable feelings; some mourned their loved ones, some considered the commemorations revenge.

Two major noteworthy events glued me to my monitor: that of the Vatican celebrations, and that of the National Cathedral in Washington. I thought I was watching a Cecil B. DeMille movie. The majesty of Saint Peter Basilica provided the background to an imperial celebration of a mass led by the Pope who looked like the poor brother of gold-bedecked and decorated, royally attired Armenian Catholicosi, one of whom had a diamond-studded cross sewn onto his miter. The president of Armenia, the secular head of Armenia stood there, or sat at the sidelines in a well-cut suit. There was a brilliant Armenian choir, which showed the world the musical excellence of Armenians.

From the pulpit, the Catholicosi preached the concept of Christian brotherly love among Churches, additionally there was demand of return of the original seat of the Catholicosate of Sis, which was confiscated by the Turks and exiled to Antelias, outside Beirut.

This was the image of Armenians as a nation presented to the world: a community, which had survived a Genocide, grown big and prospered under the auspices of their host countries, and under the control of the Church hierarchy.

Nothing Secular.

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The National Cathedral was the next major event. There the Church displayed the same scenario in the presence of, amongst other dignitaries, the vice-president of the United States, confirming the image of Armenians as *Millet*. Nothing Secular.

On Wednesday, May 13 His Holiness, the Catholicos of the Great House of Cilicia met close to 100 community leaders and dignitaries to answer their questions.

According to a press release from Antelias, His Holiness discussed six issues:

1. The Genocide Centennial
2. The lawsuit filed with the Turkish Constitutional Court for return of the Church property of Sis.
3. The dilemma of Armenians in war-torn Aleppo.
4. The situation in the Middle East.
5. The Armenia-Diaspora relations,
6. The mission of The Great House of Cilicia.

All but one, major secular issues were addressed by a head of the Armenian Church, rather than the secular, ordinary Armenians and the Armenian political parties.

This too is a regrettable regression to the Medieval past of the Nation, when we were considered to be a *Millet* administered by the Patriarchate of Istanbul, and the Catholicosate of Cilicia centered in Sis.

For decades we have yearned for, preached, struggled, and made major sacrifices to regain Western Armenia. We have constantly advocated a United Free, Sovereign Armenia. We have made the provisions of the Sevres Treaty, and Wilsonian Map our guide and the path to realize our goal. Yet, the Church reduces all that to a meager opening salvo of requesting return of Church property of Sis.

Once again, this is a regrettable regression to Medieval past of our nation. It is to this and the next generation of Armenians to shed this status off our backs and work for a real obligation to liberate our kin and the land of Western Armenia.