WESTERN ARMENIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS

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The following is an adaptation from the website of the International Organizing Committee of Western Armenian Congress

Introduction

Far from their historic homeland, the descendents of the Armenians of the Ottoman Empire (Western Armenians) represent the largest and the essential part of the world Armenians, and as such, are the legitimate claimants of their historic and legal rights. They are also the main resource for the secure and efficient functioning of the present Republic of Armenia . Western Armenians, however, do not have an organizational capacity nor coordination mechanisms, despite the existence of multitude of associations, organizations and political parties.In the past two attempts were made to organize the Western Armenians by convening the First and Second Congresses in 1917 and 1919 in Yerevan. The last National Congress met In 1919/1920 in Paris in support of the negotiations leading to the Paris Peace Conference.

Goals of the IOC

The International Organizing Committee for the Preparation of the Western Armenian Congress was created as an NGO in 2006 and consists of a group of voluntary members including historians, lawyers, intellectuals and businessmen committed to the idea and the necessity of preparing and convening a Congress of Representatives of western Armenians. The latter being the legitimate claimant of its own historic and legal rights.The Congress will establish representative bodies of Western Armenians including the Western Armenian National Assembly and the National Council as well as other Committees. The representative bodies should address all the issues related to the unlawful expropriation of private properties of citizens as well as of public institutions and buildings (churches, schools , clubs etc), and unlawful deportation of citizens from their original place of birth or residence. Strengthening the ties and the cooperation between different segments of Armenians as well as the distribution of responsibilities and roles between the Western Armenians and the Republic of Armenia would be essential.

Present status

The IOC is registered as an association under French law and has branches in Yerevan, Geneva and Moscow . It consists of founding members from Europe, North America, the Middle East , Russia and Armenia and will be extended to include members from Latin America, Australia etc. The present list may be extended to include new members who support the activities of the IOC.Thus far the IOC has held eleven meetings in France, Switzerland, Cyprus and in Armenia, has addressed historical, legal , organizational and financial issues, and has published a number of documents and books.

WHY AND HOW TO ORGANIZE THE WORLD ARMENIANS

Despite the loss of statehood extending over centuries, Armenians led a civil, creative life in the

Ottoman and Russian empires, in Persia, and living mainly on Armenian historic territories for thousands of years, by the beginning of the 20th century had accumulated sufficient resources, material and spiritual, to secure a safe existence and development. It's not difficult to imagine what future and incredible opportunities could have opened before the nation, if its collective intelligence and collective will founded the means of prevention of national disaster during World War I.The thesis that the Armenians were doomed to Genocide and nothing was related to the strategy and tactics of the national liberation movement, is a myth. A scientific objective analysis of political life of the Armenians for the last 150 years will inevitably show that more responsible, safe way of protection of national interests free from romanticism and adventurism existed. The latter was defended by Armenian conservative circles, Gabriel Ayvazyants, Malakiya Ormanyan, Spandar Spandaryan, etc. That's what Loris-Melikov was telling about to the Armenians of Constantinople during his visit to the city in 1859.Even after Medz Yeghern, the Armenians had the chance for a national rebirth by preserving the Republic of Armenia, with its capital of Karin, and the adjoining parts of Western Armenia, within the framework of Erzerum, Van, Bitlis and Trabizond regions, de jure assigned to Armenia by Sevres Peace Treaty on August 10, 1920. This chance was conditioned by the capacity of the Armenians to combine their remaining forces to stop Bolshevik - Kemalist aggression.

Armenians had possibilities and certain opportunities, but lacked the ability to concentrate on the available nationwide potential. The formation of a necessary all-Armenian representative body responsible for tactics and strategy for the resolution of the Armenian Question also failed.

Numerous committees, such as National Council of Russian Armenians (September to October 1917), the National Council of the Turkish Armenians, and the Government of the Western Armenia (Security Council) in December 1917 were acting separately. Attempts to form a unified government proclaimed in 1919 as Free Independent Unified Armenia (consisting of representatives of the East and West Armenians) also failed. The Unified government was to be headed not only by the East (Russian) Armenians, but also West (Turkish) Armenians, such as Boghos Nubar, Gabriel Noradungian and others experienced in public administration. Having an international authority, this could have favoured the combination of the potential of the World Armenians: for the organization of repatriation, the return of deportees, the settlement of liberated territories, the creation of a strong army capable of defending and preserving a unified state, and for acting in the international field with a single position.

Armenians failed to do this. That is the main reason for further defeats and the losses of independence and freedom of the Republic of Armenia. Of course, there were objective difficulties but there were always chances to overcome them.

The goal for the formation of a powerful independent Armenian Factor in the international field exists nowadays. Now global conditions are better -- for Armenians -- than they were at the beginning of the last century. And Armenians have improved in strength. This century may be

favorable for Armenians, if they draw lessons from mistakes, defeats and losses, and work for a necessary national unity.

The first stage on the interrupted path of the formation of the Armenian Factor -- after the catastrophe of Western Armenia (հայաթափում) and defeat, partitioning and loss of the independent Republic of Armenia -- was the treatment of wounds following deportations, the restoration and strengthening of forces of the Armenian Diaspora, conservation and development of Armenian life (culture, education, economics) in Soviet Armenia in spite of a criminal totalitarian anti-national regime destroying national, spiritual life, the restoration of national independence in 1991, victory over Azerbaijan in the war (1992-1994) launched by Baku, the liberation of the major part of Artsakh and its de facto unification with the Republic of Armenia in 1994.

The second stage on our path shall be the creation of the appropriate mechanisms which will provide a full-fledged participation of the Armenian Diaspora, namely the descedents of the Western Armenians, former citizens of the Ottoman Empire. To this end a National Congress of the Western Armenians will be convened in Paris to establish authorized representative bodies - the National Assembly and the National Council of the Western Armenians.

The Organizing Committee will follow the course of events and keep the public informed.