WILLFUL DISREGARD OF REALITY

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Category: Opinions

Editorial, June 2013

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- ***“Ankara Angry at Recognition of Armenian, Assyrian and Greek Genocides by New South Wales”***
- ***“Obama Tells Insurance Companies Not to Recognize Armenian Property Rights”.***

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The first headline is about a nuclear business agreement between Ankara and Paris. France expects to earn billions in the deal which will see the French construct Turkey’s second nuclear plant. In these hard times (French general unemployment is 10 %; for young people it’s 25%), President Francoise Hollande knows French-Armenians will not complain too vociferously if he breaks his word to the Armenian community and forgets the bill which would have penalized Genocide denial.

The second headline is about Ankara’s anger at New South Wales in Australia because that state has recognized the Armenian, Assyrian and Greek Genocides. Armenians, although few in number in Australia, received recognition because they formed an alliance with the 400,000- strong Greek-Australian community and the well-organized 65,000-strong Assyrian-Australians.

The third headline is about President Barak Obama’s attempt to sabotage American-Armenian efforts to recover, from Turkey some of what that country owes Armenians. Why is Obama working against us? Because we know that Turkey is more important to him than the million-plus Armenian-Americans.

The often-difficult circumstances Armenians have lived for nearly two millennia have made most of us realists, if not hard-nosed, in our personal affairs. The realism has helped us survive in our ancestral, but occupied homeland, and even prosper in foreign shores. We know—in the words of

Euclid—"there's no royal road in life", especially for Armenians. Most of us are taught, from early age, that we have to earn our success. So why do we abandon our hard-earned realism when it comes to international affairs impacting us as a nation? Why do we suddenly become naïf?

When François Hollande of France shilly-shallies about his promise to Armenians, when US presidential candidates promise to recognize the Genocide but "change their minds" after they take office, and when the majority of the countries at the UN dismiss our just case… why are we surprised and indignant?

When injustice takes place around the world we shrug and say "the big fish always eat the small fish" or "states are not moral entities". We know these as bitter realities, but forget them when it pertains to our national interests and out the window goes "Yeghoonk oonees kloukht kereh" Armenian proverb.

We choose to forget the nature of politics. To re-word an Armenian phrase, certain American politicians support us not for "our brown eyes" but because we have a considerable number of votes in their districts or because Turkish votes are negligible or non-existent. It's rare—as in the case of Canada—where a government acknowledges the Genocide because it believes in doing the right thing, despite blackmail and threats by Turkey.

It's no accident that Uruguay was the first (1965) to recognize the Genocide. It did so mostly because the Armenian community in Uruguay was well organized and the country had no relations with remote Turkey. France was also a pioneer in Genocide recognition because there are 400,000 French-Armenians. Although the various governments of Israel, Jordan, Syria, and Egypt know that Turkey committed genocide against the Armenians, they will not acknowledge the fact because Turkey is a friend.

Another stark example of the determining role of self-interest in international politics is the case of Mahatma Gandhi, the much-honored leader of India's independence movement. "Saintly" Gandhi refused to condemn the Turks in 1915 because he didn't want to alienate the Muslim faction in his movement. And he had the nerve to accuse the British Raj of hypocrisy.

Our willful disregard of historic facts goes back millennia. Although the Crusaders repeatedly betrayed us, we maintained our alliances with them. We also continued to believe the "Christian" West would save us from the Ottoman sultans, although Britain, Germany and Austria sided with the vicious Sublime Porte.

We bemoan that we desperately need unity of vision and action in our national and local affairs but turn around and boast about our own individualism. We blame Armenians for being "all chiefs and no Indians" and then act like single-minded, prescient pundits.

We pride ourselves that we are an industrious and peaceful people who have not coveted their neighbors' lands. In the same breath we express pride in Medzn Dikran who had six kings chained to

his victory chariot and who conquered most of Asia Minor and the Middle East. A psychiatrist or neurologist might diagnose that perhaps various parts of our brains have delinked from one another.

Throughout history conquerors have habitually changed the toponyms (place names) of the lands they have conquered and introduced names of their own liking to underline their ownership of the land. Due to historic vicissitudes in ancient Armenia Minor ("Pokr Hayk"), towns and regions called Sber, Nicopolis, Aghuyn, Taranghi, Mouzour, Tasdarag, Gohombeneh, Khorsapia, Posatourn, Kuntusa had disappeared long before the Seljuks drowned the land in blood. Over the centuries Urfa (now Sanliurfa) has been called Urhoy, Urha, Urhai, Riha, Justinopolis, and Edessa. Adana was Adaniya, Edene, Batana, Ezene, Erdene, Ta Adana, Azzana… Marash (now Kahramanmarash) was Germanicia Caesaria, Kermanig. Aintab (now Gaziaintab) was called Hantab/Hatab by Crusaders, Khantap by Hittites, as well as Ayintaba. What Armenians now call Lake Van was Pzounyah or Dosba Dzov in ancient times while Lake Sevan was Gaboudan, Kegharkouni, Keghama Dzov. But despite the universal custom of toponym changing, Armenians continue to get irate when they hear Turkey has replaced Armenian place names with Turkish ones. One Armenian author has even published a book on the dastardly deed of the Turk.

We have every right to remind the world of the toponym changes, but we also have to admit that since Turkey occupies our mountains, rivers, lakes and cities fulminating about what Turkey has done and is doing is waste of our energies.

We have to tackle our national challenges the way we face our personal problems. We have to be realistic and remember how diplomacy has always operated. We should discard our delusions about ourselves and others. We should look into the mirror—blemishes and all. And we should not lead ourselves down the garden path—there are odar volunteers on standby for that job.