

ON THE PREPARATIONS OF THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE

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In the early 1960s, on the eve of the 50th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide, the Diaspora Armenians began a vigorous struggle both to solve the Armenian Question and to get international recognition for Armenian Genocide. The Soviet Armenia was also included in the cumulative maelstrom of the process, already commenced.

Unlike the USSR central government, the Mother See of Holy Echmiadzin had started its works earlier, dedicated to the 50th anniversary of Armenian Genocide. On August 17, 1964, Catholicos Vazgen I issued a statement (kondak) on "the martyrdom of the Western Armenian people during World War I", proclaiming that the 1965 should be the year of "mourning and prayer for Armenian Church and people."¹ Taking into account the fact that the Armenian Church was not competent to make such a decision without the permission of Soviet Government, it can be said that the Church had received the consent of the latter. Let us note that the document, written by K. Dallakyan, the chairman of the State Council for Religious Affairs under the ASSR government and addressed to the head of the same department of the USSR Central Government, A. Puzin, reads clearly, "By the decision of Armenian government the republic will celebrate that anniversary in 1965 (means the 50th anniversary of Armenian Genocide - Ch. M.). As we have learned, the government (means the Armenian SSR government - Ch. K. M.) entered the Central Committee of the CPSU and got permission".²

The Armenian Church, too, had a chance to organize various events, dedicated to the 50th anniversary of Armenian Genocide. And often the Catholicos was taking self-made steps, which were seriously echoed in Diaspora communities. As a convincing argument for the events, organized by the Mother See, the factor of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (Dashnaktsutyun) was being provided for Moscow by K. Dallakyan. He had made it clear in his letter that the Dashnaktsutyun party and the Catholicos of the Great House of Cilicia, Khoren I, were trying to use the issue to inflame anti-Soviet sentiments.

According to K. Dallakyan, the issue of celebrating the 50th anniversary of Armenian Genocide had become part of Echmiadzin-Antilias struggle. In that way, he

¹ The National Archive of Armenia (hereafter referred to as NAA), s. 409 (Supreme Spiritual Council of Echmiadzin), I. 1, p. 520 (the kondak of Catholicos Vazgen I on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of Armenian Genocide; August 17, 1964), p. 1.

² NAA, s. 823 (the State Council for Religious Affairs under the Government of the Republic of Armenia), I. 7, p. 73 (Report on Correspondence of Catholicos Vazgen I; 1964-1965), p. 7.

also justified the activities of Vazgen I, hinting that these steps were increasing the reputation of Echmiadzin among Diaspora Armenians.

Let us notice that this was not the first case when the ARF factor was speculated. On July 16, 1964, Ts. Aghayan, the director of the Armenian branch of Marxism-Leninism Institute, the head of the Oriental Studies Sector of the Armenian SSR, H. Inchikyan and the deputy head of the CPA Central Committee's ideology department, J. Kirakosyan brought the ARF factor as a convincing argument for marking the 50th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide when addressing the letter "about holding events on the 50th anniversary of the mass extermination of Armenians in Western Armenia" to the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Armenia (CPA), having noted that "The anti-revolutionary, nationalist Dashnaktsutiun Party tries to use the issue to inflame anti-Soviet sentiments. ... Silence on the 50th anniversary of mass killings of Armenians will not be politically advantageous".³

This letter was almost identical to that Ya. Zarobyan sent to N. Khrushchev on September 18, 1964.⁴ In other words, it was one of the most solid arguments.

As to Catholicos Vazgen I, he was not satisfied just with the statement (kondak); he had been engaged in quite a large-scale activity. On September 24, 1964, he addressed Pope Paul VI⁵, Patriarch of All Russia Alexiy⁶, Michael Ramsey, Archbishop of Canterbury, and General Secretary of the World Council of Churches, Visser't Hooft⁷, offering them to perform a liturgy, dedicated to the victims of Armenian Genocide.

K.Dallakyan's attempt in the letter to comment on the initiative of Catholicos proves once again that Vazgen I had acted independently and often did not inform the Soviet government for apparent reasons, thus provoking the latter's anger.

Despite this, his initiative had a positive effect as the Pope Paul VI and the Archbishop of Canterbury and Primate of All England, Michael Ramsey, responded and performed liturgies to the memories of Armenians who were massacred in the Ottoman Empire during the First World War.

Below are the documents, kept at the National Archive of Armenia - stock 323 (the State Council for Religious Affairs under the Government of the Republic of Armenia), list 7, piece 73 (Report on Correspondence of Catholicos Vazgen I; 1964-1965). It contains several interesting articles, related to the events held by the Mother See on the eve of the 50th anniversary of Armenian Genocide.

The archival piece under discussion starts with the letter of Catholicos of All Armenians, Vazgen I, addressed to Pope Paul VI and dated September 23, 1964, and

³ Harutyunyan A., The 50th anniversary of Armenian genocide and the Second Republic, Yerevan, 2015, p.22.

⁴ Ibid., p. 23.

⁵ NAA, s. 823 (the State Council for Religious Affairs under the Government of the Republic of Armenia), l. 7, p. 73 (Report on Correspondence of Catholicos Vazgen I; 1964-1965), p. 1-2.

⁶ Ibid., pp. 3-4.

⁷ The letter of His Holiness Catholicos of All Armenians to religious leaders of sister-churches regarding the 50th anniversary of the the Great genocide of April, «Echmiadzin», 1964, 11, p. 8-9.

ends with the secret message of K. Dallakyan to Puzin in December 23 (the entire package includes 4 documents).

The following document, presented to the reader's judgment, is not the complete correspondence, but merely the last one. It gives a complete picture of tricks the government of the Soviet Armenia applied in 1965 to present the process of preparation of various events to the official Moscow.

Letter 1.

4 December

Secret

To the Chairman of the Council for Religious Affairs under the Council of Ministers of the Union of the SSR

To comrade Puzin A. A.

In the order of information, we report the following:

In the upcoming year, 1965, it will be 50 years since the mass killings of Armenians in Western Armenia. On November 29 of this year, the Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Republic, Comrade N. Harutyunyan, called it "the greatest catastrophe and tragedy" in the life of Armenian people in his report when considering this crime at a ceremonial meeting on the 44th anniversary of establishment of the Soviet power in Armenia. "What was committed by the ruling circles of Sultan's Turkey in relation to the Armenian people," he said, "during the first imperialist war, was in fact the beginning of the cannibalistic genocide in the history of modern times, which, 25 years later, during the second world war, Hitler's bloodthirsty fascists did on a larger scale and with more advanced methods in relation to a number of peoples" (newspaper "Sovetakan Hayastan", November 29, 1964).

By the decision of authorities of Armenia in 1965, this date will be celebrated in the republic. As we have learned, the governing bodies entered the CPSU Central Committee on this issue and received their consent.

1965 becomes important for foreign Armenian colonies. There is a sharp struggle over this issue between the progressive wing and the Dashnaks along this year. The former seek to hold the anniversary of the massacre under the sign of strengthening the struggle for peace, strengthening ties and uniting around the motherland - Soviet Armenia. Dashnaks, on the other hand, are trying to steer the public along the course of the American program for the "liberation of enslaved nations".

The Antilias Catholicosate, led by the Dashnaks, pursues its interests, too. On August 16, 1964, Khoren I issued a special kondak (encyclical) in which he almost literally repeats the corresponding paragraph of the decision of the Dashnak congress on "Liberation and Independence" of Armenia. The most dangerous thing was that in this Kondak Khoren turned not to his congregation, but to the entire foreign Armenian population, trying to take over the functions of the Catholicos of all Armenians. Thus, the

question of celebrating the 50th anniversary of the massacre becomes a decisive element in the common struggle of Echmiadzin-Antilias.

In this situation and in coordination with the governing bodies of the republic, the Catholicos of All Armenians Vazgen I issued a Kondak and sent it abroad, calling on foreign Armenians to fight for world peace, so that similar tragedies in the history of nations should have never been repeated. The Catholicos praises the free homeland, Soviet Armenia, and calls on all foreign Armenians to be united around it and actively support the motherland.

In addition, to raise Echmiadzin's reputation and seize the initiative from Khoren I, Vazgen I addressed letters to the Pope, Archbishop of Canterbury Ramsey and Patriarch Alexiy, asking them to "offer prayers for the souls" of Armenian victims during the First World War. Information about these appeals appeared in the foreign Armenian press and caused a great resonance, thus increasing the weight of Vazgen I as the only head of Armenian Church.

Paul VI and Ramsey have already positively responded to the mentioned letters. On November 18, a special liturgy was served in Vatican in line with the directive of the Pope, dedicated to mass victims - Armenians who fell during the First World War.

The translated texts of the above-mentioned Kondak of Vazgen I, as well as his references to Alexiy and Paul VI are attached. The contents of Vazgen I's letters to Wieser Huft and Ramsey are almost the same as those of the enclosed appeals.

Enclosure: 10 pages

Chairman of the Council

K. L. Dallakyan

Letter 2.

**To the Chairman of the Board of the Armenian Church Affairs at the Council
of Ministers of the Armenian SSR, Honorable Mr. Karlen Dallakyan**

We hereby confirm our letter dated August 17, 1964, and dedicated to the martyrdom of the Western Armenian people during the First World War, by which we declared the coming 1965 the year of mourning and prayer for the Armenian Church and people.

Our letter was printed abroad, in the Armenian press, and found a wide response in all the Armenian Church communities. Armenians everywhere are prepared to honor the memory of our two million innocent Armenians with dignity and honor. In some colonies such as New York, Buenos Aires and the Middle East, special monuments are being built to commemorate our martyrs.

Consequently, it is evident that a sacred duty is growing for us to build a monument-mausoleum anywhere near to the Holy Etchmiadzin to symbolize and

sanctify the memory of two million martyrs of our Western Armenians who did not have a grave, thousands of Armenian clergymen and church servants being among them.

This Christian and humanistic thought warmly speaks with our hearts and we want to accomplish it for the consolation of the servants of Armenian Church and our beloved people.

The monument we have planned should be built in an Armenian style and near the Cathedral, in an appropriate place, having roughly the usual fountain-monument dimensions.

Letter 3.

**To His Holiness the Patriarch of All Russia, Alexiy
Your holiness,**

The Armenian Apostolic Church and all the Armenian people should mark the 50th anniversary of the death of two million Armenians in Western Armenia next year, which took place during the First World War.

We, as the supreme patriarch of Armenian Church, considered it our duty to issue a special kondak for August 17, 1964, dedicated to the 50th anniversary of the great tragedy of our church and our people, announcing 1965 the year of mourning and prayer: and yesterday, with our letter of 24 September, addressed to the general secretary of the World Council of Churches, Father Wiesert Hüft, we suggested the World Council of Churches and its sister-members, driven by feelings of Christian mercy and justice, take part in the great mourning of Armenian Church on April 24 next year, having offered prayers for the repose of the souls of about two million martyred Armenians.

It will be extremely comforting for us to hope that Your Holiness and the Great Russian Orthodox Church will also be with us at our mourning moment with its ardent prayers at the time of mourning of our church and our people.

Accept, dearly beloved our brother in Christ, our greetings of pure love and our heartfelt benevolence, so that you may live for many years and continue to guide and console the God-loving great Russian people with your holy hand.

**With love in Christ
Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians
Vazgen I**

**Translated from Armenian (into Russian)
24/9, 1964, Echmiadzin**

Letter 4.**To His Holiness the Pope
Paul VI**

For us, it is a great spiritual satisfaction to send your Holiness a real message at a moment of historical significance for our church and people.

Next year, the Armenian Apostolic Church and the entire Armenian people should celebrate the 50th anniversary of the death of about two million Armenians in Western Armenia (Turkish Armenia), which began on April 24, 1915.

The annihilation of the entire Armenian people in Turkish Armenia was accomplished in a state-organized and premeditated form by the Sultan's government. During 1915-1920, thousands of cities and villages, monasteries and churches of historical Armenia were robbed, burned and turned into ruins, and a whole people - men, women and children, were driven into the deserts of northern Syria in an unbearable physical and moral torment, having been annihilated there in the deserts of northern Syria.

What happened was the first major crime of genocide in the history of modern times. The only guilt of the tortured Armenian people was their desire to live in this world as a Christian and as a free nation.

We, as the supreme patriarch of Armenian Church, considered it a duty of our conscience to publish a special kondak for August 17, 1964, dedicated to the 50th anniversary of this great tragedy of our church and our people, announcing 1965 the year of mourning and prayer.

We hereby draw the attention of Your Holiness and the entire Catholic Holy Church to the date mentioned, thinking that, having been led by Christian mercy and justice, you would deign on April 24 next year to join your great church prayers and that of your to our prayers for the rest of the souls of about two million tortured Christians.

The prayers of your Holiness and the prayers of all the sister-churches will be the deepest consolation for the grieving heart of all believers of the Armenian people.

Please accept your holiness our greetings of fraternal respect and love and our warm wishes for good health.

**With love in Christ
Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians
Vazgen I**

Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians

**St. Echmiadzin
October 24, 1964**

Translated from the Armenian by Vahram Gharakhanyan

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23 декабря 4

Секретно

Экз. №...

ПРЕДСЕДАТЕЛЮ СОВЕТА ПО ДЕЛАМ РЕЛИГИОЗНЫХ
КУЛЬТОВ ПРИ СОВЕТЕ МИНИСТРОВ СОЮЗА ССР

Тов. ПУЗИНУ А.А.

В порядке информации сообщаем следующее:

В наступающем 1965 году исполняется 50 лет со времени начала массовых резней армян в Западной Армении. 29 ноября т.г., на торжественном заседании по поводу 44-ой годовщины установления Советской власти в Армении, в своем докладе, председатель Президиума Верховного Совета республики тов. Н. Арутюнян, расценивая это преступление, назвал его "величайшей катастрофой и трагедией" в жизни армянского народа. "То, что было совершено правящими кругами султанской Турции по отношению к армянскому народу, - сказал он, - в годы первой империалистической войны, фактически явилось началом того канибалского геноцида в истории новейших времен, который 25 лет спустя, в годы второй мировой войны, совершили кровожадные гитлеровские фашисты в более крупных масштабах и более усовершенствованными методами по отношению к целому ряду народов" /газ. "Советакан Айастан", от 29 ноября 1964 г./.

По решению руководящих инстанций Армении в 1965 году в республике будет отмечаться эта дата. Как нам стало известно, руководящие инстанции вошли в ЦК КПСС по этому вопросу и получили согласие.

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1965 год приобретает важное значение для зарубежных армянских колоний. Уже с начала текущего года там происходит острая борьба вокруг этого вопроса между прогрессивным крылом и дашнаками. Первые стремятся провести годовщину резни под знаком усиления борьбы за мир, за укрепление связей и сплочения вокруг родины – Советской Армении. Дашнаки же пытаются направить общественность по руслу американской программы "освобождения порабожденных наций".

Свои интересы преследует также руководимый дашнаками Антилиасский католикосат. 16-го августа 1964 года Хорен I издал специальный кондак /энциклику/, в котором он почти дословно повторяет соответствующий пункт решения съезда дашнаков об "Освобождении и независимости" Армении. Опаснее всего было то, что в этом кондаке Хорен обращается не к своей пастве, а ко всему зарубежному армянскому населению, пытаясь отнять функции Католикоса всех армян. Таким образом, вопрос о праздновании 50-летия резни становится звеном общей борьбы Эчмиадзин-Антилиас.

В этой ситуации, по согласованию с руководящими инстанциями республики был издан и заслан зарубеж кондак католикоса всех армян Вазгена I, в котором он призывает зарубежных армян к борьбе за мир во всем мире, чтобы никогда не повторялись подобные трагедии в истории народов, восхваляет свободную родину – Советскую Армению и призывает всех зарубежных армян сплотиться вокруг нее и активно поддерживать её.

Кроме того, для поднятия авторитета Эчмиадзина и перехвата инициативы у Хорена I, Вазген I обратился с письмами к Папе

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3.

Римскому, ВСЦ /в Женеву/, Архиепископу Кентерберийскому Рамзею и патриарху Алексию, прося их "вознести молитвы за упокой души" массовых жертв армян в годы первой мировой войны. Информация об этих ~~публичных~~ обращениях появилась в зарубежной армянской печати и вызвала большой резонанс, в пользу повышения авторитета Вазгена I как единственного главы армянской церкви.

Павел VI и Рамзей уже положительно откликнулись на упомянутые письма. По указанию Папы, 18-го ноября в Ватикане была отслужена специальная литургия, посвященная массовым жертвам — армянам, павшим в годы первой мировой войны.

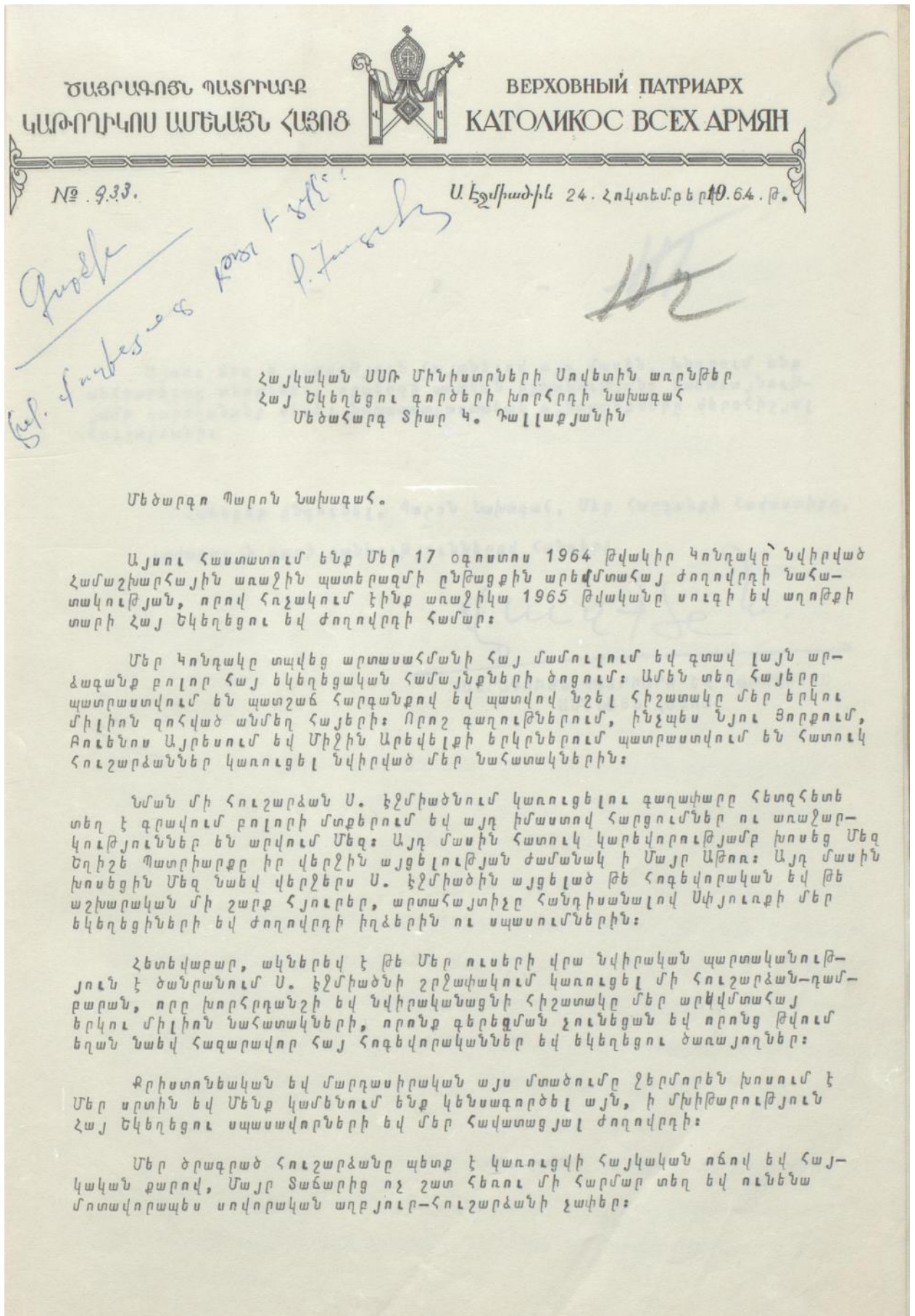
Переводные тексты упомянутого выше кондака Вазгена I, а также обращений Вазгена I к Алексию и Павлу VI прилагаем. Содержание писем Вазгена I к Визерту Хуфту и Рамзею почти аналогично содержанию прилагаемых обращений.

Приложение: на 10 листах.

ПРЕДСЕДАТЕЛЬ СОВЕТА

К.Л.ДАЛЛАКЯН

Отпеч. в 2-х экз.
Экз. № 1 — в адрес
Экз. № 2 — в дело
ЛА



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Перевод с армянского

25/9, 1964 г.

Эчмиадзин

Его святейшеству патриарху
всея Руси Алексию

Ваше святейшество

Армянская апостольская церковь и весь армянский народ в будущем году должны отмечать 50-летие гибели около двух миллионов армян Западной Армении, которая произошла в годы первой мировой войны.

Мы, как всеобщий патриарх армянской церкви, сочли долгом Нашей совести издать специальный кондак, за 17 августа 1964 года, посвященный 50-летней годовщине великой трагедии нашей церкви и нашего народа, объявляя 1965 год годом траура и молитвы: и вчера, Нашим письмом от 24-го сентября, на имя общего секретаря Всемирного Совета Церквей отца Визерт Хуфта, предложили, чтобы Всемирный Совет церквей и его члены сестры-церкви ведомые чувствами христианского милосердия и справедливости, приняли бы участие в великом трауре армянской церкви и 24-го апреля будущего года вознесли молитвы за упокой души около двух миллионов замученных армян.

Крайне утешительно будет для Нас надеяться, что Ваше Святейшество и Великая Русская Православная церковь также своими горячими молитвами будет находиться рядом с нами в траурный момент нашей церкви и нашего народа.

Примите, очень любимый Наш Брат во Христе, наш привет чистой любви и Наше сердечное благожелание, чтобы жили Вы дол-

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где годы и Вашей святой рукой продолжали руководить и утешать
боголюбивый великий Русский народ.

С любовью во Христе

Вазген I

Верховный патриарх и католикос
всех армян

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Перевод с армянского

24/9, 1964 г. , Эчмиадзин

Его святейшеству Папе Римскому

Павлу VI

Ваше святейшество

Для Нас является большим душевным удовлетворением направить Вашему святейшеству настоящее послание в момент, имеющий историческое значение для нашей церкви и народа.

Армянская апостольская церковь и весь армянский народ в будущем году должны отмечать 50-летие гибели около двух миллионов армян Западной Армении /Турецкой Армении/, которая началась 24-го апреля 1915 года.

Уничтожение всего армянского народа Турецкой Армении совершилось в государственно организованной и заранее продуманной форме Султанским правительством. В течение 1915-1920 годов тысячетные города и села, монастыри и церкви исторической Армении были ограблены, сожжены и превращены в руины, и целый народ - мужчины, женщины и дети, в неистерпимых физических и моральных муках был загнан в пустыни северной Сирии и уничтожен.

То что свершилось, было первым крупным преступлением геноцида в истории новейших времен. Единственной виной замученного армянского народа было его желание жить на этом свете как христианин и как свободная нация.

Мы как всеобщий патриарх Армянской церкви, сочли долгом Нашей совести издать специальный кондак, за 17 августа 1964 года,

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посвященный 50-летней годовщине этой великой трагедии нашей церкви и нашего народа, объявляя 1965 год годом траура и молитвы.

Настоящим обращаем внимание Вашего Святейшества и всей Католической св.церкви на упомянутую дату, думая, что ведомый чувством христианского милосердия и справедливости, Вы сблаговолили бы 24-го апреля будущего года присоединить Вашу и Вашей великой церкви молитву к нашим молитвам за упокой души около двух миллионов замученных христиан.

Молитвы Вашего Святейшества и молитвы всех сестер-церквей будут глубочайшим утешением для скорбящего сердца всего верующего армянского народа.

Примите Ваше святейшество Наши приветы братского уважения и любви и горячие благопожелания крепкого здоровья.

С любовью во Христе

Вазген I

Верховный патриарх и Католикос
всех армян