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ST. GREGORY OF NAREK
ARMENIAN CHURCH

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CLEVELAND SCORES HEAVY MEDIA COVERAGE
ON MARTYRS' COMMEMORATION

CLEVELAND, OH. --- The Armenian community here set another media benchmark on April 28, 1985, when it commemorated the 70th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide.

All of Cleveland's network TV stations, along with the PLAIN DEALER, largest daily in the State, covered portions of the day-long ceremonies. Earlier in the week, Rev. Fr. Diran Papazian, pastor of St. Gregory of Narek Church, and community leader Kevork Arslanian appeared on the Mort Downey show, broadcast over Cleveland Radio WERE. Their hour-and-a-half interview prompted a host of call-in questions regarding the attempted genocide of the Armenians by Turkey.

Scenes from the moving outdoor commemorative ceremonies, held at the Martyrs' Memorial located on the grounds of St. Gregory, were telecast over early and late evening news shows. WEWS-TV 5, the local ABC outlet, preceded its coverage by showing, via satellite, some 2,500 Greek Armenians marching in peaceful protest against the Turkish Embassy in Athens.

The PLAIN DEALER's three-column feature included an interview and large photo of Mrs. Agavni Chobanian, 84, who was in her early

teens in Ankara, Turkey, in the 1915 massacres. The story also included Father Diran's statements after the planting of a dogwood tree by the young people of Cleveland's ACYOA in memory of the Armenians killed in 1915.

Said Father Diran to the congregation, "The tree is a living symbol, symbolizing family and people. With its roots planted firmly, it will grow and thrive and sing and flower each spring. Our young people are making a statement. And the statement is this: 'We will grow and survive as a nation and remain true to the faith of our forefathers.'" Following his comments, Father Diran then turned a shovel of earth, watered the tree and blessed it.

Divine Liturgy, celebrated by Father Diran, and Holy Communion for the genocide survivors marked the formal opening of the day's commemorative events. Following the special outdoor memorial service and tree planting, parishioners, friends and guests, about 150 in all, regrouped in St. Gregory's hall for a buffet luncheon and spirited program.

Superlative in virtually all aspects, the program was highlighted by a roll call of all the survivors of the 1915 massacres residing in the Cleveland area. Of the 74 names on the roster, more than 30 were present, to step forward when their name was announced and receive a long stemmed carnation and lit candle.

Keynote speaker Dr. Daniel C. Melnick, with great eloquence, stated his case for "Breaking the Silence." With a restrained passion reflected throughout his talk, which brought a total hush to the audience from his first to last words, Professor Melnick stated, "... it is the silences in this genocide which especially make speaking out so important and so necessary. That silence of Turkey is a cancer eating away at its backward national culture and its Moslem soul; as long as it remains, it is an unforgivable silence. It must end. And when it

does, then you may ask yourselves to forgive --- though not to forget --- because forgiveness and understanding are at the core of life and humanity. How can we speak in such a way as to penetrate the silence?"

Professor Melnick pointed out, "The Armenians were denied a Nuremberg trial to expose and judge Turkey's crimes against humanity, and it must be the historians, the survivors, the churchmen and the poets who together form the Nuremberg tribunal for the crimes of 1915."

Professor of English at Cleveland State University, Dr. Melnick is the son-in-law of famed Armenian poet Aram Arax. He and his wife Jeanette (nee Arax) make their home in suburban Cleveland.

Dr. Hart Guonjian, retired deputy coroner of Stark County (Ohio), recited the famed poem by Siamanto, "A handful ashes of my house from my homeland." Dr. Guonjian, who makes his home in Canton, is himself a survivor of the 1915 massacres.

A number of proclamations were read during the program. Matt Hatchadorian, who sought the 19th Congressional District seat in last fall's elections, noted that Cleveland Mayor George Voinovich indicated a personal interest in the Armenian cause, "as he, too, shares our ethnic background." Mayor Voinovich proclaimed April 24, 1985, "Armenian Martyrs' Day" and stated, "We join with all Armenians in this solemn remembrance, praying that the free people of the world will never allow this tragedy to be repeated anywhere."

Other proclamations from U.S. Representatives Mary Rose Oakar, Edward Feighan and Dennis Eckert, as well as Ohio Senator Howard Metzenbaum, were also read.

The entire audience joined in the singing of "Hank-Tcheh-Tzek" (Martyrs' song) and "Der Getzo," the Armenian national anthem. The day's activities, which highlighted participation by ACYOA members, were sponsored jointly by St. Gregory of Narek Armenian Church and the AGBU, Cleveland Chapter.