

COMMENTS ON DR. BABAJANIAN'S JUDGMENTAL THOUGHTS

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Գրքատար Համբարձումյան

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Shahen, USA, 1 December 2011

The following is in response to [Dr. Babajanian's comments](#).-Ed.

Dear Dr. Babajanian,



Shahen is my assumed name. I appreciate your extremely helpful notes which you forward to the public via e-mails. I receive them through a third party. Skills to write in our mother tongue are lost, and it will be difficult to write and read Armenian in Latin characters. Hence I am tempted to express myself in English.

Like you I have lived in Soviet Armenia. It's been 30 years since I left the country and I regret doing so. Coming to these shores, I initially lived in an area where you would scarcely meet any Armenian, and that was deliberate. My experiences in the motherland had made me almost an anti-Armenian. I was critical of the system and have tasted the KGB treatment.

I take this opportunity to comment on some of the judgmental thoughts that you have expressed.

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I take this opportunity to comment on some of the judgmental thoughts that you have expressed.

You mention corruption. I am glad that you did. That's what brought the KGB into play when some friends and I protested against corruption. Monetary bribes were only one aspect of corruption which was available to the public. There were other means too, as you mention.

Yet, living on these shores I have come across to so many modes of corruption that I wonder whether there is a difference between legalized corruption (in the West) and ostensibly illegal corruption under the Soviet system. Cursing the latter is the norm today. To blame the system alone

and make generalizations about the observed instances of corruption, you have to compare them to how matters were dealt with prior to Sovietization. Our pre-Soviet literature is full of depictions of gross corruption within the Armenian communities in Tbilisi and Baku. Yerevan then was a tertiary town. I am sure you've read Shirvanzade and know all about the villains and the victims. So, please stop blaming only the system.

I am sure you are following the national and international news. Wasn't Enron part of the system? Wasn't the unresolved financial crisis due to greed and milking of people legally, obtained by people who run our own financial life and many other aspects of it?

What's happening in Greece and Italy? Corruption is the culprit, according to most observers. Are they Soviet countries? Aren't you following Murdoch et al story in England and the "eavesdropping" that somebody tried to even defend today in the name of pursuit of unraveling the truth? I guess that's not spying for monetary or other gain. Is it or is it not?

"Ah", you would say, "Here we have the means to know about these matters and bring the culprits to justice." What difference does it make for ordinary people who get hurt because of such actions? Is anybody listening to them?

Please don't misunderstand me. I am not an apologist for corruption, and am simply trying to point the incongruity of your generalizations about corruption in Soviet time as causality for the present situation.

Another issue that you raise is the relation of intellectuals to authorities. It's a well-known fact that intellectuals, innovators, artists, writers, scientists, no matter where they have lived, throughout history, have been critical of the systems in which they have created. They have been persecuted by the system for political, ideological, ethnic or other reasons. Nonetheless, their contributions to their respective people, culture and country have been recognized in time, many posthumously. Humanity, overall, has eventually accepted their greatness. I need not enumerate names as you, a highly-educated person would know them.

Here is the difference. Acknowledgment of the eminence of those three invaluable people you mentioned was **during their lifetime and by the system**. Khachatryan created "Spartacus"--probably as a protest against the regime--while living in the system and received all the honors that could have been bestowed on an artist. Sevak created his *Antereli Zankagadoun* which was published in thousands of volumes, recited and re-recited **by theatre actors of the system**. Hambartzumyan reached an acme in his field, became the president of the astrophysicists, a position that could not have been attained **without the support of the system**.

"Character"? You, as a physician, should know better. It is a complex concept, and hard to define given the social, economic, historical, religious, biological, and genetic elements that leave an impression on human beings. Yet, I think I know what you mean; it's the moral decadence and all that it entails. My question to you is: do you approve of what we see around us in a non-Soviet

system?

Respectfully,

Shahen, USA

