DEBATING THE 'KARABAKH DEAL'

Posted on December 28, 2008 by Keghart

Category: Opinions

By Bruce Tasker, Yerevan, Armenia, 5 December 2008

Two years ago, when I embarked on my publicity campaign to expose World Bank Armenian corruption, I assumed I would receive numerous complaints and a level of abuse. But I have been pleasantly surprised that comments on my work have been to the greatest extent very supportive, and among hundreds of messages of thanks and encouragement, I have received only a couple of complaints. Attacks are therefore not unexpected and I do not find them obstructive; to the contrary they provide the opportunity for healthy discussion.

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Serzh Sargsyan, in his determination to fight corruption in Armenia, promised to look at my action with the Bank last year. But he declined to meet with Dr. Beatrice Edwards when she came from Washington to Armenia to discuss the matter. So I decided to extend my campaign to cover the Karabakh issue, which I have argued has for several years been at the core of the highly corrupt WB/IMF agenda, a critical issue for Armenia – now combined with Genocide.

Dikran Abrahamian decided to support my efforts, through his highly rated 'Keghart.com', and there the debate has taken off in earnest, to which I respond as follows:

Re: Bagrad (Bernhard) Nazarian

With respect to the Armenian newspaper *Haykakan Jamanak: if I am put in the same* mindless idiotic category, then I thank Bagrad for that; *Haykakan Jamanak* provides a great deal of valuable and verified information which would not otherwise be made available. The regime prefers to deal with deception, as covered in considerable and verified detail in my article Karabakh/Genocide - The Deception, which links to just a few classic examples. My personal experience with *Haykakan Jamanak was in December 2007 when they covered my action in Washington against World Bank corruption in Armenia. Their editor-in-chief insisted on studying my suitcase full of evidentiary documents before he would write a single word. That was contrary to Aristomene Varoudakis, the present WB Country Manager, who gathered reporters to try and discredit my claims, only having to apologise afterwards to myself and Dr. Beatrice Edwards, who had travelled from Washington for the meeting, admitting he had NOT seen any of the project or claim documents.*

I am sure your readers will be as intrigued as I am with Bagrads question: Is there any concrete report about the journalist who got beaten up? Any evidence as to who he is, who beat him and why? How can he purport to be an authority when he asks such

ridiculous questions, especially when he goes on with his "experience of corruption in Armenia/Artsakh being minimal"? All other official sources report that corruption is very high in Armenia and it has been escalating alarmingly for the past several years.

Re: Avedis Kevorkian boycott

I agree with his logic, it is money from the Diaspora which finances the regime's corrupt activities and strengthens their grip over society. In February it was estimated to be a central pot in the region of $6-8 million every day – after they have all taken out their personal millions. Today that pot is much less, and that is the crux of Armenia's present economic crisis, which mostly affects the corrupt construction sector, and is why many of their money-laundering constructions are at a standstill. The problem is akin to the three US car giants; give them the money knowing most of it will be taken out by the management, or cut off the cash flow and be blamed for causing the workers to suffer. In Armenia, the people will suffer in either event, either a bit more now if the money is cut off, or a lot more in the longer term if the Diaspora keeps funding the regime.

Benjamin Franklin said so appropriately in 1755 – "They, who can give up essential liberty to obtain a little temporary safety, deserve neither liberty nor safety". I agree with him.

Re: Armen Araratian

He is right that I know little about what actually is in the minds of near seven million Armenians. But I do know what is in the minds of Robert Kocharian, Serzh Sargsyan and Eduard Nalbandian, and it is for that reason I continue with this campaign, to try and stop them selling Karabakh (and it now appears also Genocide), which whether he likes to believe it or not, they are well into the process of doing. If Armen does not realise it by now, then he will find out very soon.

I applaud his statement that "We know our lesson well, rest assured. Not an inch of land will be ceded". But unfortunately I can not see how Armen and the other seven million Armenians are going to stop the regime; after Armen and his 7+ million sat back and watched how Kocharian stole most of Armenia's state assets. I trust he now realizes that that part of the equation is already history, as eventually do most of the 2+ million Armenians left in Armenia. But only after my four-year fight (not simply talk) against corruption and comprehensive publicity campaign, in Armenia, the US and the UK, based on my in-depth investigations for a Parliamentary Commission. In fact, looking at today's news from Helsinki, I see that snipers are already being removed from the conflict line, based on November 6th agreements reached in Moscow. Armen should have no doubt that this is the start of the capitulation.

Re: Bagrad Nazarian

"Mr Tasker has the complete freedom to speak as much as he likes as no one in Armenia ("the Kocharian/Sargsyan regime", etc.) seems to limit his freedom" Firstly, the regime knows me very well and they know that what I write is very near to the truth, possibly even under-stated, otherwise they would have put a stop to me long before. Secondly Bagrad will be pleased to learn that the regime has trumped up a $65,000 penalty for my persistence with this issue. The court case was on the 21st November, when the judge's off-the-record comment to me was 'I'll be kicked out of court if I support this ridiculous claim'. My next court

hearing is on the 19th December, when no doubt the regime will put more pressure on the judge. So there will probably be a nice Christmas present waiting for me.

Re: Papken Harutunian's "Armenians are not a tribe that their leader can decide their future for them":

Allow me quote from Galust Sahakyan's 3rd December 2008 statement, which is covered in the news article The President Decides No Matter What – "The fact of the matter is that it makes no difference - who said that the people will decide, for example, the Karabakh conflict? The president will be the one to decide."

The debate goes on, hoping for the right conclusion – for Armenia, Karabakh and the peoples living in the surrounding territories – and for that matter, Azerbaijan.

Bruce Tasker

Still fighting with GAP in Washington to reduce corruption in Armenia