

INQUIRY INTO ARTSAKH WAR INJUSTICES

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By Prof. Z. S. Andrew Demirdjian, Los Angeles, 18 December 2020

I was devastated like many others as to why we had lost the Artsakh War. What factors and injustices had contributed to the loss? To appease my conscience as to what went wrong, an inquiry was in order.

I read many news reports, interviews and commentaries to form a clear picture of what had gone wrong. Drawing upon some of the events surrounding the hostilities, I came up with factors that contributed to the disastrous outcome of the war. I also compiled a collection of "injustices" relating to the war.

One of the major injustices begins with the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe Minsk Group's Co-Chairs of Russia, France, and the United States. So many times Azerbaijan had launched sneak attacks on Armenia and Artsakh while President Ilham Aliyev had gone scotch - free for violating the ceasefire agreement of 1994.

Also, during the war the Minsk Group's countries did not issue warnings or sanctions to Azerbaijan to stop the killing of the unarmed civilians, their infrastructure, and the barbaric mutilation of the Armenian captive soldiers by beheading and skinning them alive.

For years the violation by the Azeris of the ceasefire was almost a daily occurrence. During the recent war, three ceasefires were disregarded by Azerbaijan. Had the Minsk Group disciplined Azerbaijan through punitive measures, Azerbaijan would not have continued to kill innocent citizens of Artsakh and Armenia.

Turkey's participation in the conflict had become obvious when in August of 2020 it had held military exercises with Azerbaijan. Repeating his earlier commitment, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan stated Turkey's allegiance and undying support of "Azerbaijani brothers" by claiming "two states, one nation." Genocidal Turkey should have refrained from playing a decisive role in turning the tide against the Armenian forces. But justice is foreign to Mr. Erdogan who is bent on creating a Neo-Ottomanism. US refused to throw its weight around to stop Turkey's participation in the war.

Another injustice was that Artsakh had to fight against an "armada" army. Azerbaijani forces were joined by Turkey, jihadists, Syrian and Libyan mercenaries, Pakistani volunteer soldiers, and Israeli military weapons and intelligence experts. The civilized world sympathized with the plight of the Armenians against the brutal method of the invaders but failed to translate that attitude toward justice into action to stop the carnage.

PM Nikol Pashinyan (elected in 2018) inherited a corrupt government. To sweep clean decades-long immoral behaviour is not easy within a short period of time, but the new government was making headway without material support from the business sector of Armenia. It was not fair to let Pashinyan alone to fight corruption. It would take any head of state years to drain the swamp.

In the age of robotic warfare, the Armenian soldiers were armed with "muskets" to defend the motherland. Instead of strengthening the Armenian armed forces, many senior military officers imitated the presidents and spent the money on them. All three former Armenia presidents were corrupt, had lived in the lap of luxury and invested heavily in foreign banks. Their theft is the epitome of injustice done to the Armenian people.

Armenia was restricted to Russian arms. Pashinyan inherited a relatively poorly-armed and ill-equipped army. For example, Armenia acquired a \$42-million anti-missile system from Russia which failed to operate as expected. The greatest cost of war is the loss of soldiers. Henceforth, Armenia should purchase modern weapons on the open market. Sending soldiers to the front without proper arms is the height of state criminality.

Israel's modern weapons, especially the UAV (Unmanned Aerial Vehicles dubbed suicide drones) and Turkey's B-16 fighters were what broke the back of the Armenian forces. Armenia had no weapons to neutralize them. The other injustice—a better name would be criminality--was the Azeri use of illegal weapons such as Ukraine-made phosphorus gas, Israeli cluster bombs, and other internationally banned weapons. UN should have intervened to stop their use.

Following its victory in the first Artsakh War Armenia became complacent that it could kick Azerbaijan in an armed conflict despite Azerbaijan's stockpiling of modern weapons from Russia, Belarus, Israel, Turkey, and the US for billions of dollars. The state's indifference to this development was injustice against the Armenian people.

Long before Pashinyan declared in August 2019 that "Artsakh is Armenia" at a Stepanakert rally, Azerbaijan was getting ready to recapture Nagorno-Karabakh militarily. It's unfair to blame Pashinyan for provoking Azerbaijan.

Armenia had always gone to bed cozy believing Russia would come to its rescue anytime the country faced aggression. The psychology of dependence on Russia has cost the Armenian nation a great deal of suffering. Most people depended on the Russia-created CSTO (Collective Security Treaty Organization) to, at least, protect Armenia against aggression when Tavush region and Vardenis were bombed. Russia's late mediation to stop the war is proof of its playing the political game of neutrality for self-interest.

During the war, Armenia received only a few volunteers from its vast Diaspora, especially from Russia, the US, and France. Sending to the front newly-trained volunteer soldiers proved to be disastrous, especially when the enemy rained bombs on them with all sorts of weapons. Bewildered, many retreated from their posts for obvious reasons: the enemy was mightier than what they had expected. The Azerbaijanis did not flee this time as they did during the 1991-1994 war. Such miscalculations were an injustice to remember for a long time.

The Armenian generals did not know what they had under their command in soldiers and weapons. Also, they should not have been in charge to select arms for they were not weapon experts. Most

Armenian generals had close ties with the corrupt oligarchs. They were nonchalant about national security issues. They even cultivated land in Artsakh for personal gain. The result? Ill-armed and newly-trained soldiers who had to face an enemy equipped with precision weapons.

Right at the beginning of the war, Azerbaijan neutralized all hidden weapons of Armenia along the border between it and Azerbaijan. How did Azerbaijan know their location? Either through spies or traitors or both.

Pashinyan's inexperience or maybe pride in not tapping into the rich resources and know-how of the vast Armenian Diaspora was disastrous. The Diaspora has high-ranking officers such as colonels, generals, brigadier generals, etc. in the US Armed Forces.

Three major domestic enemies of Armenia are Serzh Sargsyan, Robert Kocharyan and Gagig Tsarukyan. Presently, they have a proxy of 17 political organizations serving as political opposition to Pashinyan. They are demanding the resignation of Pashinyan by trying to create national crisis within the crisis of losing the war.

It would be a grave mistake to stop Pashinyan from realizing his 15-point recovery plan to be completed within a six-month road-map. The so-called 17 political organizations want to turn the whole country in revolt. Such disastrous machinations in the aftermath of the war are the ultimate injustice against the Armenian nation.

Lack of unity between church and state has become evident. Just recently, Catholicos Karekin II and Catholicos Aram I joined the foray to force Pashinyan to resign. These two clergymen have been serving the Armenian oligarchs including Serzh Sargsyan and Robert Kocharyan. When the country is trying to cope with the aftermath of the war, it would only be fair to expect our religious leaders to cooperate to pick up the pieces as efficiently as possible. Instead, our spiritual leaders are playing politics.

Allegedly, during the war, agents of the 17 political organizations had gone to Artsakh to sabotage the war by colluding with the generals not to arm the volunteers. As a result, the generals sent soldiers to the front as cannon fodder. These are two of the worst injustices visited upon the Armenians.

Some returning soldiers reported they could not fight without proper arms. It seems that the Armenian generals also colluded with the opposition political groups to sabotage the war in favour of Azerbaijan with the aim of ousting Pashinyan. If true it would be one of the most shameful injustices perpetrated upon the Armenian nation.

This is an inquiry, or if you like a soul-searching journey, into the devastating toll on Armenian lives, property, and territory. Injustices were committed by the enemy as well as by the Armenians who were complacent about the change of Azerbaijan from being a cowardly, disorganized slumbering giant into an efficient war machine.

~~A national soul-searching should be conducted to avoid these mistakes again. We can do it by~~ showing unity, courage, and cooperation; by the strength of the mind that makes one able to meet danger and difficulties with firmness.

The Armenian nation is mourning but not desolate. It's resolved to defend Artsakh at any cost for we are known to be a resilient people who have survived the Sumerians, the Babylonians, and the Assyrians as well as calamities almost every century during our long history. Although we have lost some of the battles, we have not lost the war. The need is acute to mobilize the entire Armenian nation for the continuation of the war for the lost territories of Artsakh.

We can do it through unity. Otherwise, the whole effort would be a pipe dream. We can do it through cooperation and collaboration to strike the enemy out of commission and regain the whole of our Artsakh. A positive attitude is a powerful force for solving personal as well as national challenges.

Comments



Gerard Panossian – 2020-12-21 18:37:54

PLEASE READ THE TRUTH . Prof. Z. S. Andrew Demirdjian : Every word Prof. Z. S. Andrew Demirdjian has said,is true. I raise my hat to him. He is 100% right. I agree with him 100%.