

THE HISTORICAL CASPIAN ARMENIA

Posted on April 10, 2023 by Keghart



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By Prof. Z. S. Andrew Demirdjian, Los Angeles, March 2023

***"A lie repeated a thousand times
becomes the truth."***

Francois René de Chateaubriand

Propaganda, in the most neutral sense, means to disseminate or to promote particular ideas of a person or a group. In Latin, it means "to propagate" or "to sow." In 1622, Vatican established a principle/program, naming it the "*Sacra Congregatio de Propaganda Fide*," which means the sacred congregation for propagating the faith of the Roman Catholic Church to spread the faith to the New World people, as well as to oppose Protestantism.

Over the years, the word propaganda lost its neutrality, and its subsequent usage has rendered the term pejorative for promoting ideas which are mostly false or half-baked. Currently, to identify a message as "propaganda" is to suggest something negative and dishonest. Thus the synonyms of propaganda: lies, distortion, deceit, manipulation, mind control, psychological warfare, brainwashing, and palaver (i.e., misleading or beguiling speech).

While the image of propaganda is now tarnished, nevertheless it can yield positive results for the user, especially in politics. We shall explore President Ilham Aliyev's use of propaganda and suggest ways to counter his distortions.

Joseph Goebbels, Adolph Hitler's Minister of Propaganda, masterminded the use of propaganda to change the attitudes of the masses. Goebbels is attributed to have said: "If you tell a lie big enough and keep repeating it, people will eventually come to believe it."

A big lie (*grosse Lüge* in German) is a gross distortion or misrepresentation of the truth, used especially as a propaganda technique. Goebbels, in his diary, wrote his 11 Principles of Propaganda which Hitler applied religiously in manipulating the minds of his people.

Seemingly, President Aliyev is becoming a master propagandist equal to Goebbels and Hitler. His power is predicated on his country's resources to supply gas and oil to Europe. Nobody seems to dare to oppose Aliyev's crusade to exploit the rights of the Armenians.

Especially since the 44-Day War in 2020, Aliyev has embarked on a brainwashing propaganda to pave the way to capture more Armenia and Artsakh territories or to intimidate Armenians to make concessions.

Aliyev has been rewriting history to create the "illusion of truth." According to psychologist Tom Stafford, repetition makes a fact seem more true, regardless whether it is true or not. Understanding this effect can help us avoid falling for Aliyev's propaganda.

Here are a few examples of Aliyev's lies and distortions: In September of 2013, he declared: "Azerbaijan's state flag should be waved in Shusha, Khankendi, and Azerbaijanis should live in their

historical lands in the future."

He went on to say: "Our historical lands are Irevan Khanate, Goyca , and Zangezur regions. There will be times, we will live in these lands. I believe it, I am sure. Everyone should put their efforts in order to achieve it."

Aliyev's propaganda was repeated in March of 2015: "Azerbaijan will restore historical justice and reclaim not only the breakaway Nagorno-Karabakh region and areas around it, which are currently held by Armenians, but also parts of present-day Armenia."

He reiterated his propaganda time and time again by stating: " liberating Karabakh, we, Azerbaijanis, will return to our ancient lands --Irevan, Goyca , Zangezur , etc., The younger generation must know that our lands are not limited to the current territories of independent Azerbaijan. We must go back to those lands as well and we will." Thus, Aliyev is sowing the seeds of the ownership of parts of Armenia in the minds of his new generation.

Often, President Aliyev has proclaimed that the major part of Armenia dubbed as "Western Azerbaijan" is, in fact, "historic Azerbaijan," and that it will be returned into the fold of Azerbaijan. His plan is not based on irredentism, but rather on rewriting history to grab as much territory as his deceits allow him to venture.

Aliyev's propaganda, based on repeated outright lies and distortions, has begun to bear fruit. In September of 2022, two Azeri citizens solemnly declared themselves to be the president and the vice-president of a new republic carved out of Armenian sovereign territories and named it "West Azerbaijan Goycha-Zangesur Republic, "which consisted of Lake Sevan and the Syunik province of Armenia with its capital in Ghapan (Kapan in Armenia).

These two pretenders also claimed Turkey was the first state to have recognized their newly formed republic. Some Azerbaijani officials have condemned the declaration of the new republic of "West Azerbaijan."

This outrageous announcement was made right after Azerbaijanis forces attacked the eastern border of Armenia proper and brutally treated the Armenian POW and civilians alike during September 13-14, 2022 unprovoked military assault. As a result of the attack, Armenia lost 200 persons and about 145 square kilometers of its land.

Armenia, Artsakh, and the Diaspora are not doing enough in the age of social media. They seem to be shrugging their shoulders at the absurdity. That posture is precarious; it is counterproductive when Aliyev is creating "truth" out of his repeated falsehoods.

When subjected to propaganda, doing nothing is a disastrous option, especially when research findings indicate that propaganda has the power to influence the mind of the masses and even foreigners.

What should Armenia, Artsakh, the Diaspora do? Ideas have changed the world. Based on studies in social and behavioral sciences, propaganda should be fought by factual and wide-spread counter communications to set the record straight.

The gist of the counter communications to inoculate audiences against falsehood should be based on the following true contentions:

- It is true, a lot of Azeris onetime lived in Armenia, especially during the Soviet era. Akin to the European Community (i.e., European Union), a Soviet citizen of one country could be permitted to live and work in any of the member countries. However, living in another country could not legitimize ownership of the land of the host country. So, Azeris living in Armenia cannot claim ownership of Armenia.
- After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the satellite countries gained their sovereignty and became free and independent again. How can Aliyev claim Armenian territories as historical Azerbaijani properties?
- With the exception of Pakistan, Armenia's sovereignty has been recognized by all members of the United Nation countries --including Azerbaijan. How can Azerbaijan now deny that truth and claim some of Armenia's territories?
- Nothing can compensate for the suffering of the Armenians in Azerbaijan during the 1980s, when the Azeris began their nefarious ethnic cleansing to quell the independence movement of the indigenous people of Nagorno-Karabakh (Artsakh) living in their ancestral lands.
- The ownership of Artsakh as an Armenian historical province is an inviolable Armenian territory right, established unequivocally by most historians and by Armenians living there continuously for millennia.
- The fact that Armenians are the indigenous people of their own republic while the Azerbaijanis are the newcomers through conquest. They should be a minority in their captured land rather than the rulers.
- Azerbaijanis are the marauders who have usurped the natives of some of the provinces of Greater Armenia: Artsakh, Nakhitchevan, Utik, Paytakaran all the way to Baku. Collectively, these provinces form the Historical Caspian Armenia. See map below.



Historical Caspian Armenia for lack of a better term to differentiate it from the present Republic of Armenia.

- The map of Arshakuni Armenia around the year 150 AD shows the Armenian provinces of Greater Armenia in the Caspian region which includes Artsakh, Utik, and Paytakaran --all the way to Baku. Armenia should claim those provinces as the Historical Caspian Armenia lands to counter the false claims of President Ilham Aliyev against Armenian territories. Once propaganda manipulates a mind, it would be very difficult to change it. So, time is of the essence in responding to Aliyev's distortions and deceptions.
- Azeris are the ones who should return the Armenian provinces. After all, everybody knows that Azerbaijan as a state did not exist prior to 1918; therefore, it is a big lie to claim that parts of Armenia are Azerbaijani's historical lands.
- Azerbaijanis homeland is in Central Asia, where some of their people still lead nomadic life on the great steppes of Asia. There is a difference between conquerors and indigenous people when it comes to decide as to whom the occupied land belongs.
- Historical Caspian Armenian provinces should be returned to Armenia since Azerbaijan, through a forced assimilation national program, has captured them and Turkified them through its patented cultural genocide of the original people of these provinces. Lezgins, the Talysh people, the Avars, and other indigenous minorities would testify to the foreign occupation of their homelands as well.
- Armenian youth should never forget their Historical Caspian Armenia for their original homeland was stolen by marauding nomads bursting out of Central Asia to plunder civilized communities engaged peacefully in agriculture and animal husbandry.

I am sure, there are many more truths to write about, but as Hitler and later social and behavioral scientists claimed, the messages of propaganda or statements of truth should also be put in slogans as well to have the desired effect on the targeted audience. Presenting the truth is the only effective "pesticide" against Aliyev's poisonous propaganda.

Vicious propaganda pertaining to one's homeland cannot be ignored. The consequence of doing nothing at the right time would cost irreversible damages. For every point, there is a counterpoint.

Propaganda is more dangerous in the digital age than ever before. While the techniques of propaganda have not changed much over the years, now anyone can go viral for social media is becoming as powerful as the traditional, commercial mass media have been for years.

We should alert all Armenians, especially journalists, teachers, writers, publishers, politicians, etc. to counter Azerbaijan's false claims of owning Armenian territories, and not to forget to emphasize that the return of the Armenian provinces of the Historical Caspian Armenia must one day become a reality. And let's remember: factual information is the ultimate weapon against the spread of the toxic effects of propaganda.

Comments



Mesrob – 2023-04-11 07:43:14

Armenia seems to have an inexhaustible supply of incompetent and or corrupt politicians starting with "Messiah" Pashinyan whose every word and decision has been detrimental to Armenia and the Armenian nation. These suicidal dodos will bury the country unless the citizens rise, arrest them, and condemn them to death for their treachery.



Tavit – 2023-04-10 21:57:23

Important article. Azerbaijan makes claims, but Armenia rarely responds or makes its own claims. This is a losing strategy, and Armenians around the world are sick of it.