

AGAIN, "THE MOMENT OF GETTING SERIOUS"

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Harut Der-Tavitian, Los Angeles, October - November 2020

Խփեցէք Դարձեալ «Լրջանալու Պահը» ընթերցելու համար հայերէն բնագիրը: ԽԱՐ.

We have written many times about the need to learn from history, giving examples from Armenian and foreign history and adapting them to current events. We won't go too far back in this article; only 23 years, citing 20 short excerpts from the press conference that the first president of the Republic of Armenia, Levon Ter-Petrosyan gave on September 26, 1997, from his article "War or Peace? The Moment of Getting Serious", published on November 1, 1997 and from his resignation letter dated February 3, 1998. We will then give our brief reflections, leaving the conclusions to the reader.

From His Press Conference on September 26, 1997

- *The ideology of the next generation and all the forthcoming generations must be the strengthening of our statehood, the prosperity of our people and the flourishing of our country.*
- *We must strive for peace, **but one of the main pillars of the pursuit of peace is the strength of the army, the military force**, which I see not as a factor of war, but as a factor of peace.*
- *Yes, I think that if a nation fails to properly assess its strengths, not only the nation but also every single person, that nation and that person can be put in a shameful state, as we see at every step.*
- ***According to our calculations, during the last five years Azerbaijan has received two to three times more weapons, equipment and ammunition than Armenia. During the past wars Azerbaijan has exhausted most of its equipment, ammunition and weapons. I think there is a balance today, and if it were not so, if Azerbaijan still had that double dominance today, I am sure it would have started the war a long time ago.***
- *If you think that in these conditions, the unresolved Karabakh issue and the conditions of blockades, Armenia can become a normal country, that the people of Armenia can live as the peoples of Europe live, it means that you have not read Khorenatsi.*
- *Do you think the international community will allow maintaining this situation for 20 or 30 years? This is out of the question, and the international community will find ways to impoverish us so much that not only will we not be able to achieve what we can achieve today through compromise, but we will be in a much worse position.*
- *The package (solution) presupposes the simultaneous solution of the issue of returning the occupied territories (except for the Lachin region), the deployment of peacekeeping forces on the Karabakh-Azerbaijani border, the lifting of the blockade, the return of refugees to their homes, and the creation of buffer and no-fly zones on the borders of Karabagh and Azerbaijan. These are sufficiently wide zones. This is one part of the package solution. The other part is the clarification of the status of Karabakh. This is one solution and, I repeat, I will not be revealing a secret if I say that this is the first time the co-chairs presented such a package solution program. In fact, no one had serious disagreements about the first part. The second part, the status of Karabakh, was*

categorically rejected by Karabakh and was just as categorically rejected by Azerbaijan.

From His Article "War or Peace? The Moment of Getting Serious" November 1, 1997

- *On September 26, my press conference, or rather the part of the press conference dedicated to Karabakh, caused a stir in the press and in the rallies organized by the opposition. It was not a surprise to me. The surprise was the quality of the debate, and simply put, the complete absence of debate. **I confess that I did not achieve my goal, which is to have a serious debate in the press and public meetings over the most pressing issue facing the Armenian people - possible ways to resolve the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.** The opposition's response was limited to swearing, attributing, labeling and distorting. No sensible proposals were made, no alternative programs were presented, and no counterarguments were brought.*
- ***When Artsakh was in danger, when the enemy had approached Gandzasar, none of them responded to Vazgen Sargsyan's call to join the "Mahabard" squad. Our people deserve better than those who seek glory at the cost of someone else's blood yet pretend to be heroes.***
- *The unresolved situation is not in Karabakh's and Armenia's interests as it significantly hinders the economic development of Armenia and Karabakh and creates complications in the relations with the international community, especially with neighboring countries, which can be crucial.*
- *The only way to resolve the Karabakh issue is compromise, which does not mean the victory of one side and the defeat of the other, but a feasible agreement to settle the conflict.*
- ***Rejection of compromise and support for maximalism (striving to achieve the maximum and not the feasible) is the shortest way to the complete destruction of Karabakh and the deterioration of the situation in Armenia.***
- *The path of adventurers will lead to inevitable defeat. Once upon a time, turning Istanbul into a sea of blood, we lost Western Armenia, and another time, demanding the territories drawn by the Treaty of Sevres, we lost half of Eastern Armenia.*
- ***The conditions we are refusing today we will request in the future, but will not get it as has happened many times in our history.***
- *We must be realistic and understand that the international community will not tolerate the situation around Nagorno Karabakh for a long time, as it threatens regional cooperation and security, as well as the oil interests of the West. **Sooner or later the parties will be forced to a compromise settlement program, which won't be a rightful but a political solution to the issue. Neither Azerbaijan, nor Karabakh, nor Armenia will be able to escape it.***
- *Compromise is not a choice between good and bad, but between bad and worse. That is to say, a compromise is just a way to avoid the worse. When the conflicting parties have come to realize what's worse, they are obliged to benefit from it, if they are able to show political will and necessary courage.*
- ***Unfortunately, Karabakh did not win the war, but the battle.***
- ***How long should the mania of becoming a toy of Russia or any other power by self-deception be the way of life of the Armenian?***

- *Does it take a lot of intelligence to understand that no matter what government is in Russia, it cannot recognize the independence of Karabakh, because it has twenty Karabakhs in its body?*

From His Resignation Letter February 3, 1998

. ***Dear compatriots, by the government bodies known to you, I have been demanded to resign.***

I ask you, dear reader, are these the words of a traitor to the Armenian nation or "a statesman who deeply understands our history and is guided by the awareness of that responsibility", as we wrote in "Massis" on October 18, 1997 in an article entitled "Traitors", Burgiba and Sadat". There we cited the example of Vazgen Manoogian, who described the president's stance as "capitulation". We also cited the "irresponsible boastful calls" of a number of newspapers in our community. You probably remember how the president was labeled with some Turkish adjectives. We also wrote that *"those who unknowingly or maliciously play with our patriotic feelings are harming our cause. In addition to the Karabakh issue, raising the demand for Armenian lands in Javakhk or Turkey at this time harms our cause. Those who try to muddy the waters to catch their fish are not only harming but also betraying our cause."* For publishing these words, we were also "granted" the title of traitor and an article was published in one of the newspapers of our community containing the words "I bite the neck of that traitor".

Unfortunately, today it is the same scenario that is being played in Armenia and partly in the Diaspora. The successors of those assembled at the 1997 Cinema House stormed into the Parliament on November 10, 2020 and wreaked havoc. How can the deserters of the front who ransacked the Parliament and those standing behind them aspire to lead Armenia? With great fanfare and showmanship, the Gagik Tsarukyans formed a volunteer group to go to Shushi to help our soldiers who were leading a life and death struggle, but somehow, they did not make it to the battlefield. How can they aspire to lead Armenia? How can those who preach upholding state and national interests above everything, but then commit the October 27, 1999 and March 1, 2008 massacres, still aspire to lead Armenia? How can those who have been plundering Armenia for twenty years, keeping the Armenian army with the weapons of the 80s and getting rich at the expense of the army today claim to lead Armenia?

With the first line of his resignation, "Dear compatriots, by the government bodies known to you, I have been demanded to resign", President Levon Ter-Petrosyan sent a message to the people that if they don't uphold their rights; some "bodies" would impose their will on the people and enslave them. The Kocharyan / Sargsyan example is before our eyes. They are the main culprits of our disaster. Do you want to be subdued by their yoke?

It is clear that we are going through very critical and fatal days for our nation. The situation is fluid and subject to daily changes. Our defeat on the outer front should not be compounded by the divisions on the inner front. The process of democratization of Armenia should not be a victim of the terrible consequences of the catastrophe, because we remain convinced that this is the sole path for

the strengthening of Armenia and the restoration of our losses. Only a democratic Armenia will attract the unconditional support of Armenians from around the globe, to develop and strengthen not only Armenia but also the Diaspora. We have that potential and capacity. So, let us spread this reality with conviction and act with that consciousness.

How to make Sense

Artsakh was liberated during President Levon Ter-Petrosyan's rule. He was accused of making Armenia "cold and dark" and robbing it.

Levon Ter-Petrosyan opened up to the people and explained what would happen if we did not compromise from the position of the winner and ceded some of the land we had conquered from Azerbaijan during the Artsakh War. Tel-Petrosyan was accused of treason.

The next president was Robert Kocharyan. He was not a citizen of Armenia, but was "elected" President of Armenia through constitutional rule violations.

The bloc of Vazgen Sargsyan (the leading figure in the liberation of Artsakh) and Karen Demirjian won the May 30, 1999 parliamentary elections, inspiring the people for a bright future for Armenia. Both were assassinated in the Parliament on Oct.27 of that year.

Kocharyan and his clique were behind the assassination, dealing a fatal blow to our statehood, but those who professed the national interest subserviently kept silent.

During the ten years of Kocharyan's rule the presidential and the local elections were rigged and institutions of strategic value were handed to Russia, the country's wealth was plundered, but the proponents of democracy kept silent by pocketing their share of the loot.

Kocharyan's handing of power to Serzh Sargsyan on March 1, 2008 was accompanied by protests. Ten demonstrators were killed by the police but those who preached putting the interests of the county and citizens above personal interests kept silent.

During Sargsyan's rule all elections were rigged and the looting of the country continued. Advocates of democracy continued to keep silent because they were rewarded with parliamentary seats and other privileges.

During the Kocharyan and Sargsyan rule the foundations of the Armenia's statehood continued to erode. The so-called advocates of a strong state subserviently kept silent.

Despite enemy Azerbaijan's multi-billion-dollar arms purchases, Kocharyan and Sargsyan, enriched their pockets with billions of dollars they had looted, mostly from the state coffers. They built fairyland castles, invested in foreign countries, served low-quality meals to the soldiers of the army,

did not enhance the military industry and all the while the propagandists of a powerful state continued to subserviently keep silent.

The Armenians of Armenia and the Diaspora, except for those in power and those few who enjoyed privileges and received medals for their obedience, were in despair in view of the deteriorating situation. Then fortunately, the 2018 Velvet Revolution, led by Nikol Pashinyan, breathed new life into them.

Since then, those who brought Armenia to the brink of the precipice have been fighting to regain the monopolies they had enjoyed in the corrupt old days.

The terrible blow that the enemy was able to deliver on Sept. 27 was the result of two decades of looting and the destructive policies of Kocharyan and Sargsyan. The positive changes of the last two years were not enough to avoid the catastrophe. Although the enemy had expected to beat us in three to five days, resistance by Armenia's heroic army dragged the war for 44 days. It is a fact that within days of the outbreak of the war, traitors went to the front to persuade our brave soldiers to lay down their arms. It is a fact that there are deserters among the protesters in Yerevan, who attacked and destroyed the Parliament building instead of fighting the enemy.

The defeat we suffered is horrendous, calamitous, and shattering. Those responsible must be identified and punished post haste. Democratic values should be upheld in the process.

The above facts are sufficient to be convinced that a return to the destructive rule of the former authorities will lead to certain disintegration of Armenia and to demoralization of the Diaspora.

There are no comments yet.