DIASPORA DILEMMA – THE TIME FOR HARD CHOICES HAS COME AND GONE!

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Category: Opinions

By Karapet Tursargisian, Nicosia, Cyprus, Hetq , 25 September 2009

How ironic and sad that this pretentious flare-up between the Diaspora and the RoA remains one of the farce that took place at the Paris Peace Conference when there were two competing delegations vying for scraps at the negotiations table – one lead by Boghos Nubar Pasha, for the diaspora/western Armenia, and the other lead by Avetis Aharonian for the first RoA.

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It was a farce then and low and behold some 90 years later the Armenian nation finds itself in the same predicament. We, as a people, haven't advanced one iota.
It is high time that all Armenians, whether they consider themselves western or eastern, diasporan or citizens of the RoA, realize that the current political entity called the RoA is the amalgam of both geographical sphere of historic Armenia and as such it remains the sole official representative of the entire nation and its interests.

The Diaspora, or certain elements within it, might think differently but that is the cold reality.

This issue isn't new and has deep roots, but the Diaspora must face facts. It cannot directly negotiate with the Turkish state; it lacks both the institutions to do so and remains disparate collections of petty organizations and spheres of interest.

The Diaspora and those forces within it who now lambast the protocols and the foreign policy of the current RoA regime need to question their own actions in the matter.

What exactly does the Diaspora want? Who speaks for the Diaspora? These questions remain unanswered and sadly will remain so.

If the Diaspora was sincere about its present outcry and criticism of the protocols, it would need to confess that its arguments against the document are flimsy and superficial at best.

Genocide recognition; fine. Then what? Even if Turkey were to one day recognize the historical truth; then what? Will this lead to the descendants of Genocide survivors to move back to western Armenia and pick up the pieces of their interrupted historical development? Surely NOT!

The Diaspora laments the actions of the current RoA regime but takes little if no interest in changing it. On the contrary, where were the so-called leaders of the Diaspora after the fraudulent 2008 presidential elections in Armenia that ushered in the Sargsyan government?

Most diasporan organizations argued back then that it was better to remain silent rather than to destabilize the country. Dear compatriots, this is unprincipled politics. You can't have it both ways!

Let the sons and daughters of the Diaspora, led by their leaders, show that they are serious about their convictions.

They should either move to Armenia or actively participate in the political process or they should create a government in exile and send its diplomats knocking on the doors of the European powers.

The ARF once again attempts to deceive the uninitiated that it is the protector of the nation's interests and declares a hunger-strike in downtown Yerevan.

Does the ARF forget the infamous Treaty of Alexandropol that it signed or the fact that they requested Turkish military help during the 1921 February Uprising to battle the advancing Bolshevik forces?

Where was the Diaspora and the rhetorical nationalists of today when ASALA was taking the fight to the Turkish heartland 25-30 years ago? Back then all one heard was "Amot, Amot" (Shame, Shame).

Let's get real folks. All this sudden bluster over the protocols is just that – empty rhetoric.

People like former Foreign Minister Vardan Oskanian wax eloquently about some imaginary injury to Armenian "self-dignity" if the protocols are signed and that we'd be depriving ourselves of future possibilities vis-a-vis territorial compensation. UTTER RUBBISH!

Let the sons and daughters of the Diaspora take up arms and fight alongside the PKK, that way they might have some moral justification to make territorial demands on eastern Anatolia.

BUT NO! Oskanian lives in a fairy-land of dreams just like the ARF who continue to spout nationalist rhetoric but does piss-all when it comes to real revolutionary work. They call themselves the Armenian "Revolutionary" Federation but don't have the guts to call for President Sargsyan's resignation. What utter nonsense.

At least, Levon Ter-Petrosyan, for all his faults, had the pragmatic nerve to say that the Genocide issue had no place in Armenia's foreign policy agenda. Basically, he told the diaspora to take the lead.

Ponder this as a final thought. When was the last time, prior to these recent protocols, did you hear any discussion or debate regarding the Treaty of Kars? The voices of dissent are so vociferous in Yerevan, Beirut and Los Angeles that one would assume that Armenians for the past 88 years spoke nothing but Kars around the dinner table or at the local coffee shop.

Now however, when there is a real document on the table with real consequences and requiring real decisions to be made, people have literally come out of the woodwork with a variety of opinions. It's this definition of the issue, of how to proceed into the unknown, which has so many at

their wit's end. Why? Because they have nothing concrete to offer as a viable substitute and haven't seen the need to for lo these many years. This is what really is at issue. Better to continue along the path of inaction and indecisiveness than actually sit down and hammer out a plan of action. That, however, requires time and effort, and a real set of national values.

Not one Armenian government in power since 1991, the year of independence from the Soviet Union, has ever said that Armenian has territorial claims of Turkey. This seemed palatable to the vast majority, in Armenia and the diaspora. So what has changed now to make so many predict doom and gloom if the protocols are enacted? Mostly it's the fear of the unknown and the understanding that they have nothing to offer as a substitute. They have been living a lie and are too ashamed to admit it.

I've come to the sad realization that as a people we should better concentrate on the here and now rather than continually living a lie and wallow in the dead-end of self-deception.

Historical experience proves we are competent to do no more.