

# THE INQUIRING CHOCOLATE SALESMAN

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**By Hagop Hagopian**, Toronto, 27 May 2023

These days the isolated Patriarch Nourhan's favorite intimate is one Abu Ali, the chocolate salesman who stops by weekly to deliver the Patriarch's Ferrero Rocher chocolates. The other day, while delivering the usual shipment, the salesman told the obese Patriarch that an angry crowd at the bottom of the Patriarchate's residence had forced him to open his chocolate boxes.

**Patriarch Nourhan:** What did the mob want?

**Abu Ali:** They said I couldn't deliver chocolates if they were Godiva. It's a Turkish-owned company, they said. Isn't it strange an Osmanli chocolate with "God Alah" in it?

**PN:** Ferrero Roche is not Turkish. Only its walnuts are from Turkey. But don't tell them. **AA:** They looked angry.



**PN:** I have no idea why they're angry, Abu Ali. Maybe they are impatient to attend mass.

**AA:** The cathedral's gates are closed and there's no service now.

**PN:** Perhaps they're unhappy because from now on they will have to pay rent to me for the

Armenian Quarter apartments they live in.

**AA:** But *Sayidi* (My Master), Your Holiness and Your Beatitude, they say they have never paid rent for the cells they live in. They say the rooms were built by the money their pilgrim ancestors donated to the Patriarchate over the centuries. They also say Roman Catholics, Greeks, and many Muslims live rent-free in apartments owned by their Churches or mosque. Under Israeli Occupation, they have no money to pay rent.

**PN:** They are lying and you are badly informed. If they have *shekels* for the movies, they have rent money.

**AA:** They say they live in tiny and dank cells and not in apartments.

**PN:** Whatever!

**AA:** They are talking about illegal church real estate contracts. What's that about?

**PN:** Abu Ali, you are being nosy and asking impertinent questions. I'm never interested in what the mob says. They are stupid, ignorant, suspicious, unreliable, disobedient, treacherous, paranoid....

(Breathless from his harangue, Nourhan catches his breath.)

**AA:** What's the contract they want to see?

**PN:** How would I know? I'm never curious about what *hoi polloi* thinks, says, and does. I am the Patriarch and the absolute ruler here. I don't have to explain anything to anyone. Paper work bores me.

**AA:** What is *high polo*? Is it an Armenian sport?

**PN:** It's Greek for common people.

**AA:** Your Highness, Your Holiness, the crowd below says you signed an illegal contract and you are giving away the Armenian Quarter to the Jews. They say you are a foreigner: you were born in Aleppo and have a U.S. passport. You have no right to decide the fate of Jerusalem Armenians.

**PN:** I have no idea of what they're talking about. I have not signed or seen any contract. All real estate deals have been handled by a man who was a priest here but is now in Los Angeles enjoying California Sunshine.

**AA:** My apologies for my impertinence, my Lord. But how can a lowly priest sell the Armenian Quarter?

**PN:** I don't know. I was writing theological articles about the Gnostics and the heretical Paulicians of the Middle Ages when this man signed illegal contracts.

**AA:** Excuse me...Why were you writing about the police?

**PN:** Forget it,

**AA:** According to Our Muslim *Waqf*, no real estate can be sold. It's a sacred trust. I thought Armenians observed similar rules.

**PN:** Abu Ali. I am beginning to develop a headache. I don't know anything about any contract. Even if there was a contract, I couldn't find it. I got so many papers. I bet the man who fled to California with his loot has the contracts...if there are any.

**AA:** When I go out, the demonstrators will demand to know what we talked about. What should I tell them, Your Supreme Eminence?

**PN:** I don't care. I'm the absolute ruler of the Patriarchate, the Armenian Quarter, the Armenian Convent, the Sts. James Cathedral, the school, the seminary, the printing press, the St. Savior, St. Thoros, and St. Archangel's Churches. I'm infallible. Nobody can tell me what to do. I was once a poor boy in Aleppo, but I crawled, scratched, climbed, and reached the top of the totem pole. Now I do what I want. I can swallow 50 of these chocolates if I wanted to.

**AA:** But Your Absolute Highness, what will happen to the priests and to the community if it's true that the priest who went to California has sold everything?

**PN:** Abu Ali, have you ever gone to school?

**AA:** I went to elementary school years ago.

**PN:** So, you haven't studied French history and haven't heard "After me, the deluge" which their king--Lewis XXX—stated. Now let's see what new flavors you've brought for me today? Surprise me, Abu Ali.

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## Comments



H - 2023-06-04 14:53:28

Thank you for the humor Fantastic or real? Hilarious and tragic! Nourhan, the ruler, is now instructed by "we the people" to nullify all contracts dealing with the Armenian properties. Abu Ali named only a few of the sold properties. Then, Nourhan must take his opportunistic clergy and leave to be among his likes in foreign lands. Never to be replaced by any abroad currently eyeing for his lucrative position as patriarch. They are all crooks and need to be under the jurisdiction of Armenian lay "hokapartsus" from East Jerusalem.



**Sylvie Tertzakian** - 2023-06-04 13:49:40

Wow! Nourhan knows history and his belly appreciates chocolates.