

HERE IS A SOLUTION. . .BUT WHAT WAS THE PROBLEM?

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By Avedis Kevorkian, Philadelphia PA, 1 January 2008

Despite the fact that I am not and never have been an expert on anything--and I am even learning more about my craft every day--and despite the fact that I can see the holes in donuts but not the donut, and despite the fact that I never tell anyone he is wrong and that I am right, I have been asked, from time to time, the equivalent of "If you are so smart, what is the answer?"

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It is then that I realize that my remarks seemed to have given the impression that I have an answer--when, in truth, I am not sure what the question is.

However, never having been accused of having any brains, I am going to try to present what I think is needed to resolve whatever it is that ails the Armenian psyche.

First, it must be determined what the goals are, what the problems are, what really is necessary to achieve what appears to be aims for the Armenians. This begs the question: "Who will decide?"

Second, it must be determined the role of the Diaspora in achieving any goal. This begs the question: "Who is bold enough to speak on behalf of the Diaspora?"

Third, it must be recognized that Armenia has no natural friends in this world--not in Brussels and Strasbourg; not in London, Paris, or Washington; not in the Council of Europe, the European Union, the United Nations--and must restructure whatever passes for thinking to accept that vital fact and to act accordingly.

Let us not be fooled by the statements of some European countries that before Turkey may be admitted to the European Union it must accept the fact of the Armenian Genocide and must normalize its relations with Armenia. First, because neither is a requirement of the Copenhagen Criteria by which all potential members are measured and, second, because these countries are not taking these stands out of love of Armenia. They are doing so because of misgivings and mistrust of Turkey, and they will abandon these views as quickly as the building of snowmen follows a heavy snowfall once America and its poodle, Britain, start applying pressure. But, to continue.

If it can be assumed that there is ONE Armenian nation that is comprised of its "motherland"--Armenia--and its Diaspora, then it must follow that the Diaspora is to serve Armenia. It is for Armenia to set its goals, set its objectives,

determine its relationships, set its targets, and it is for the Diaspora to aid in implementation of these by working in their host countries. In effect, it is not the Diaspora that dictates to Yerevan; it is Yerevan that explains, if you will, to the Diaspora. The Diaspora, then, has the choice of helping or, if it disapproves or otherwise disagrees, refrain from any action, especially negative. The Diaspora does not know what is best for Armenia; only Armenia does. It cannot be otherwise.

Thus, it follows that there must be a single voice in the Diaspora in each country. There must be only One Voice that contacts the governments of the host countries, to speak on behalf the Armenians. There can be (and, being Armenian, there will be) many duplicate benevolent, cultural, professional, social organizations, but they do not contact government authorities. The One Voice does. If needed, the One Voice may--and should--call on the benevolent, cultural, professional, social organizations for aid, as well as calling on individuals who may or may not have ties with any Armenian organization--and, alas, they are legion.

To achieve this level of action, it is necessary for the Diaspora Armenians to think in terms of the host country--as Canadians in Canada, as Americans in America, as Mexicans in Mexico, etc.; as Argentines in Argentina, as Brazilians in Brazil, etc.; and as French in France, as Britons in Great Britain, as Germans in Germany, etc. In short, the Diaspora must realize and accept that the Armenian so-called "political" parties did the Armenians no good in the 19th century, did the Armenians no good in the 20th century, and are doing the Armenians no good in the 21st century.

Speaking for the only (alas) country about which I think I know something, it means that In America, the Armenians must be active as Armenian Democrats, as Armenian Republicans--and, if you are so inclined, as Armenian Greens, as Armenian Vegans--(not passively, as voters only), must join "think-tanks," and must join American organizations that have "clout" in Washington, as well as in state capitals and city and town councils. These people must do so not as members of the useless Armenian political parties, but as Americans. Once situated therein, they take their lead from the One Voice.

By now, if anyone has read down this far, he is saying, "That's fine, as long as it is MY voice." And, alas, "ay, there's the rub," to quote Hamlet in his soliloquy

Not too long ago, I saw a remarkably damning film about Azerbaijan, made by two Czechs. It showed the massive corruption in the country on national and local levels, the high-living style of the Baku rich, the abject poverty of the masses, the harassment of anyone who complains or protests. When I suggested to one of the three advocacy/lobby groups in Washington, that this film would open the eyes of the members of Congress who think that there should be parity between Armenian and Azerbaijan, I was told that "no member of Congress would ever spare one-and-a-half hours to see a film." When I suggested that there be a showing for Congressional staffs, I was given the same answer. At this, I asked myself, how, then, can these self-same Senators and Congressmen and their staffs listen patiently to three Armenian advocacy/lobby groups, each, ostensibly, selling the same message? I took for an answer the fiasco surrounding the HR106 resolution. The simple answer: "They can't." And, it is obvious that many of them didn't.

What I am saying is not novel or original with me. Merely looking around at the most successful ethnic group in Washington tells us that the "mother" country sets its policy, and its Diaspora follows-up.

So much for the first two points, above. As to the fact that Armenia is without natural friends, simply read all the pious words that were expressed after the 1894/96 massacres, after the 1909 Adana massacre, during and after the 1915/23 Genocide, and look at how those words were translated into action. Recall how San Stefano became Berlin, and how Sèvres became Lausanne. In a vacuum, people may like and admire Armenia and the Armenians; introduce Turkey into the discussion, and those self-same people will readjust their views. Turkey knows this and takes advantage of it--successfully.

During its long struggle for an independent homeland, as espoused by Theodore Herzl, after he witnessed the humiliation of Alfred Dreyfus, in 1896, and fathered Zionism, the Jews learned that they, too, had no natural friends in the world--and acted accordingly. Thus, when it attained independence in 1948, Israel formulated its policies on that basis. To use a prize-fighting idiom, "Israel punches above its weight."

The Armenian anti-Semites--latent and overt--should cease their rantings against the Jews and Israel (which is nothing more than envy) and should be honest enough to say to themselves, "let me learn from them, not hate them."

It will take boldness, it will take courage, it will take daring on the part of the Diaspora to put behind it 19th-century thinking and to live in the real world. It will mean not confusing passion with thought. It will also take the realization on the part of those who profess to speak for the entire Diaspora that they do not represent the entire Diaspora. It may be argued--and it is a telling argument--that the huge, vast majority of the Diaspora really doesn't care about the so-called "issues" about which our poorly-supported newspapers (and now, the various web-sites) are filled. If there are 4-million Armenians in its Diaspora, probably fewer than 40,000 world-wide really "give a damn."

The chances are that those "don't give a damn" Armenians are showing their unconcern because of the divisive--and duplication of--activities in their communities. At this point, it might be well to say something about the idiotic situation of a divided Armenian Church. If the word "idiotic" seems strong, try the following. Try to explain to a non-Armenian why there are two Churches, why some people boast--Yes, there is no other word--that the Armenians have "One Church with two heads"! Watch the non-Armenian listener's eyes glaze over as he listens to an explanation (devoid of canonical, doctrinal, or theological differences) that justifies a diprosopus tetrotus monstrosity called "The Armenian Church."

All of the above is contingent on the premise that the Armenians really know what they want and are willing to strive to achieve that "want." Whether or not they are up to it is, frankly, doubtful.

Is it possible for someone to say, with authority, "We Armenians. . . ."? If such an Armenian were to do so, would he receive full and unequivocal backing and support? What is to be done by someone who--not having been consulted--disagrees with what is being advocated by that Armenian? Or resents that someone is "speaking" for the Armenians?

I recall my father being approached by an Armenian who said, "I understand that you have been in City Hall on behalf of the Armenians." My father admitted it. The Armenian asked, "who gave you the authority?" My father conceded that no one had, and said to the man, "Next time, you go." Whereupon the Armenian said, "But, I don't know the Mayor." My father replied, as he turned away, "I do." Needless to add, that challenging Armenian was a member of one of the useless "political" parties who have assumed for themselves the ownership of Armenia and all Armenians "and who gave you the right to express an opinion without our permission?" I have heard that "Who gave you. . . ." challenge often enough to know that the Armenians will agree to One Voice as long as it is their voice, and may go so far as to sabotage the efforts of any other Armenian or group bold enough to dare speak or try to act on behalf of all Armenians.

But, unless it is possible for a One Voice to appear, it is unlikely that any of Armenia's, and its Diaspora's, aspirations and goals would be realized--assuming that those "aspirations and goals" can be determined and agreed.

Who knows? When--if--there is a unity among the Armenian Diaspora, perhaps many of the academics, businessmen, professionals and others with the kinds of influence and skills that are necessary to fight the good fight may decide to come into the fold and do their share. Of course--and here it is the cynic speaking--it could be that those who divide our Diaspora (world-wide and locally) do not want these academics, businessmen, professionals because they may not be able to be controlled.

Thus it is that I have refrained from trying to come up with the "answer" or the "solution."

But I do agree with the 20th century's greatest philosopher, Pogo, when he said: "We have met the enemy and he is us."

