

KEEPING MUM NOT A CHOICE

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✘ Keghart.com Team Editorial, 11 October 2010

✘ Some Armenians believe we should not discuss certain touchy subjects, our shortcomings and problems in the media. We should talk about our challenges in private, within our living room walls, in community centres, they argue. "Washing our dirty linen" in public assists Ankara to gauge our mood, concerns ... and plan strategies to counteract our efforts. In an even more potent figurative language, they maintain that by airing our issues publicly we act like besieged people who wail their plight over the walls of the harried city, tipping the enemy of our vulnerabilities.

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"Balderdash," we say.

How can we remain silent about the recent killings and "suicides" in the Armenian Army?

How can we not comment on the recent and frequent Artsakh/Azerbaijan firefights when the Armenian side, more often than not, is suffering higher casualties than the enemy?

What kind of confidence do the above tragic cases inspire among Armenians when almost on a weekly basis Baku threatens war against us?

How can we ignore the Humvee-escorted mafia oligarchs who prance in downtown Yerevan, intimidating everyone and corrupting everything they touch?

How can we not discuss the plight of three pillars of the Armenian Church—the Patriarchates of Jerusalem and Istanbul, the Mkhitarists in Venice and Vienna?

And what about the crevasse in two of our three Diaspora political parties? Should we not address the divisions which hurt not only the parties involved but the Armenian nation in general? Finally, what about the major political party—Tashnagtsoutune—which takes its marbles and goes home when it doesn't like an aspect of inter-Armenian community cooperation? While we admire Tashnagtsoutune for its remarkable efforts against 'Jermak Chart' (White Massacre), shouldn't someone say out loud that the political party's 'lone wolf' act is arcane and damaging to us all? We wonder how many members of Tashnagtsoutune really know the mission statement of the party, its strategy, its thinking, where it's headed. And what's the big secret about the doings of the "gomides" and "bureaus"? Is it necessary to repeat the lack of cooperation among our political leaders that hurts our fragile Diaspora?

Yes, we wouldn't be surprised if Turkish intelligence agents are monitoring our media. In the Age of Internet, surveillance has become much easier to conduct. But putting the lid on our festering problems will not make the problems go away. We all know this, but sometimes choose to forget that shedding light is the best serum.

Rather than advocating 'circumspection' and 'keep it in the family', these preachers of silence should come forth with constructive ideas, and expose their opinions to the test of intelligent and knowledgeable debate.

Pick a copy of the famous "Bartlett's Book of Quotations" and you will find that it is replete with sage advice on the benefits of the free exchange of ideas. Ditto the Bible.

Letting Ankara know of our challenges -- in Armenia and in the Diaspora -- is not something we are eager to do, but the alternative suggested by some wary Armenians is worse for our nation. Silence obstructs communication, leading to ignorance or to the monopoly of information by committees and "insiders." Silence can also lead to complacency and lack of accountability. As Montreal intellectual and activist Viken Attarian pointed out at a recent gathering in Toronto, centralized structures, such as the Soviet Union, are doomed. The impossibility of effective communication in large or complex structures is one of the reasons monoliths will go the way of Ozymandias.

Every day we receive letters at Keghart.com. Most of them are well-informed and all are well-meaning. Some are controversial, others express views we do not adhere to. But it is by publishing them all that we and readers can determine the brightest and the most constructive ideas.

The recent history of Armenians has made us a global nation. Thanks to electronic communication we are connected by a magical, invisible network. Whether we live in Melbourne, Moscow or Marseilles, we are just clicks away from fellow Armenians. The Internet reveals our concerns to Ankara, but it also bonds us, and helps us work together. Let's take advantage of this 'God-sent' facility.

Our enemies in Ankara maliciously claim that our leaders employ the "myth of the Armenian Genocide" as a glue to hold us together and preserve our identity. Let's turn that false claim on its head. Let's use the Internet as a key to advance our cause, even if Ankara spooks are reading our communications.

