LET'S NOT FALTER AS OF DAY ONE

Posted on May 7, 2010 by Keghart

Category: Opinions

Team Keghart Editorial, 8 May 2010

On several occasions Keghart.com has asserted its support to the proposed Western Armenian National Congress. This is based on the belief that the Congress will be capable to mobilize a competent legal team that will present the Armenian demands in national and international courts. That is our understanding of its main thrust.
Nonetheless, it is important to underline that such support does not necessarily mean total agreement with the historical positions and interpretations of the International Organizing Committee (IOC) of the proposed Congress, posted on its website.

The IOC maintains, "The thesis that the Armenians were doomed to Genocide and nothing was related to the strategy and tactics of the national liberation movement is a myth. A scientific objective analysis of political life of the Armenians for the last 150 years will inevitably show that more responsible, safe way of protection of national interests free from romanticism and adventurism existed. The latter was defended by Armenian conservative circles, Gabriel Ayvazyants, Malakiya Ormanyan, Spandar Spandaryan, etc. That's what Loris-Melikov was telling about to the Armenians of Constantinople during his visit to the city in 1859."

The period under consideration is open to interpretations by Armenian and international scholarship, with a variety of conclusions. It is amazing to note such an extremely judgmental opinion in IOC's statement. For one, it fails to mention the external non-Armenian factors that played a crucial role in what evolved during the aforementioned period, and more importantly lays the responsibility of the ensuing calamities on Armenians. The intent here is not to elaborate on the historical dimension of this issue but rather its relevance to what the IOC proposes to accomplish by creating the Congress.

Tactically, it makes no sense. Instead of bringing together as many people as possible with a variety of backgrounds and use that potential towards a common goal, it alienates individuals and indeed a whole sector of the Armenian Diaspora which strongly believe that the national liberation movement was in response to half-hearted reforms and reneged promises by the Ottoman authorities.

Secondly, it plays directly into the hands of the Turkish propaganda machine which asserts that Armenians brought upon themselves whatever calamities they endured because of their irresponsible activities as citizens of the empire.

It is fair to ask whether above opinion is what the IOC **as a team** believes in. If that's the case, then it should be open to criticism at least on tactical grounds. Alternately, if it is the view of some historians who adhere to the mission of the proposed Congress then the website should have a page where a variety of opinions are posted and not only one historical interpretation is provided to the public.

The IOC statement goes on to state, "The first stage on the interrupted path of the formation of the Armenian Factor … was the treatment of wounds following deportations, the restoration and strengthening of forces of the Armenian Diaspora, conservation and development of Armenian life

(culture, education, economics) in Soviet Armenia **in spite of a criminal totalitarian anti-national regime destroying national, spiritual life**.." (Bolded by Keghart.com).

Again, this view is open to criticism both on tactical and historical grounds. Has the IOC taken upon itself the task of educating the public in Armenian history or is it trying to organize a political entity that will present the Armenian demands on the international scene? Which one is it? Yes, historical analysis is a must to forge a program for the future, but failing to see the shortcomings of such an analysis and propagating ideas such as above are counter-productive or serve no purpose in reaching the stated goal.

Despite all that happened during the Soviet period, the undeniable fact remains that within two generations Armenia's population more than doubled. Furthermore, for the first time in more than six hundred years Armenia became the centre of Armenian culture, giving hope for further growth. Weren't these factors that were celebrated as signs of "national" "spiritual" rebirth irrespective of what political views people held? Weren't these the very reasons why Diaspora Armenians who were not necessarily in the pro-Soviet camp had started to warm up towards Armenia? The list goes on, but as mentioned earlier, the intent of this editorial is not to engage in historical evaluations but to consider practical implications.

As pointed out with respect to the IOC take on mid-nineteenth century, the analysis about Soviet Armenia has the distinct potential of alienating left-leaning intellectuals. Some of these intellectuals were or still are pro-Soviet Armenia. There is a host of capable and dedicated individuals among them who have advocated for legal international solutions of the various aspects of the Armenian cause for more than a quarter century--long before IOC came into play. Is IOC telling them that it does not need their participation or co-operation?

If above considerations are brought up because of tactical concerns, the ensuing matter is of a more bothersome nature at various levels.

Some members of the IOC have made statements equating the Kemalist Turkey with Bolshevik Russia. This is preposterous. It's perfectly acceptable to enumerate the consequences of what each side did, but propagating the idea, whether explicitly or implicitly, that the result for Armenia and Armenians were the same or almost the same is unacceptable and contrary to reality. The Kemalist Turkey continued to perpetrate acts of genocide. Is it mplied that Bolshevik Russia did the same to Armenians?

Hopefully, the IOC will deliberate on the above enumerated concerns prior to calling a general convention where drafts of policy statements and strategic plans are expected to be provided. Meanwhile we propose that IOC:

1. Enunciate a revised mission statement with precisely defined goals, without the burden of convoluted analyses,

2. Delete references to above mentioned historical points and evaluations from the policy statement,

3. Devote a section of “opinions” on IOC’s website where a variety of views may be posted for public’s participation in the ongoing discussions.