A MYSTERIOUS MESSENGER

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Category: Opinions

By Harry Mardirossian, Toronto, November 2021

The tall young man with whom I was having coffee was a student at the nearby University of Toronto. He had impressed me with his question to the three professors during the Q/A session following their lectures. The gathering was at the university on the 100th anniversary of the first Armenian Republic's independence.

He had asked the professors how Armenians, after having lost their sovereignty for more than 500 years, resurrected their country and again became an independent state.

The three lecturers were taken aback by the question. With a few witty words the first shuffled the query to the next lecturer who suggested the third lecturer was better qualified since he was a senior professor. The senior professor took the audience on a history ride bypassing the student's question.

At the end of the gathering, I invited the young man to a nearby cafe so that I may know him better. He was in his last year taking political science, he said. He appeared calm except when discussing the tragic fate of his people. At times his raised voice attracted customer attention.

He said: "I am the son of a great and old empire. Today, only a few have heard of it. Had there been no Bible people would have confused my homeland with an exotic fruit." It sounded like a line he had uttered before.

He then took a deep breath and said he was Assyrian. He asked whether I knew the age of the Assyrian empire. "Many races have invaded or passed through Mesopotamia. Our empire survived them. But during my four years at the university all I read about my nation was contradictory and scary. These centers of knowledge in the West spoon-feed education to make students feel good and be convinced that what he had learned was the unquestionable truth.

I could sense he was in turmoil: while he talked, his features changed to the bas reliefs of the stiffly poised Assyrian imperial guards.

He said: "During my childhood, my grandmother ignited my imagination with fables of fantastic dragons. What I see now is the same competition one against the other. Humanity is the food of these dragons where might is always right. I was reading about Turkey's decision to build a large dam near the city of Mardi supposedly to prevent area residents drown in an imminent flooding." He said people near the dam were forced to move. "They are Assyrians who have lived there since the dawn of civilization. With no other choice, thousands emigrated as far as Norway and Sweden."

"This, of course, is a well calculated plan for the eradication of aboriginals from their ancestral lands. I feel we are surrounded by the dragons my grandma used to tell me about. These ferocious creatures need to constantly consume. When in need, they provoke revolutions," he said. According to him, the dragons' preferred diet is ancient civilizations which have traditions and rich history such

as Persia, Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon. During medieval times Europeans had used religion as an excuse to invade the Middle East.

The Assyrian elaborated: "The art of invasion today is perfected with a new image of the 'ultimate benefactor'. Their main target is to shake the family values that glue these peoples' societal fabric. Once this is disturbed the upper class is forced to leave its ancestral lands. They emigrate to Europe, America, and Australia."

Although we had come out of three long lectures, I continued to listen to him because his ideas were parallel to the diaspora Armenian views.

"Listen," he suddenly exclaimed while scratching his dense beard. "You Armenians don't appreciate your sovereignty, nor your independence. You abandon your land for material gain in greener pastures. Old nations must stick to their lands because we, as ancient civilizations, have shared history, developed culture and philosophy, and a unique way of looking at the world. We have shared the wisdom of writing, literature, art, religion, science and inventions, refined astronomy and gastronomy."

He had more to say. "This bit by bit accumulated wisdom is drained while the dragons feed on us. They first make us pitiable and process us to their liking. Later, with great preconditions, they give us the honor to be chosen and be digested," he explained.

He then proceeded to complete his theory. "Imagine for a second that there is not a notch of difference between the human digestive system the way the dragons treat their prey. Say, you eye an apple. You slowly take a crunchy bite or two, you chew it and process it in your mouth and then swallow it. The process of appropriation is almost complete. And before it is expelled the assimilation is achieved through your intestine where the 'appleness' is dissolved. They first undo the elements that constitutes us as a nation and people. Once our essence and dignity are subliminally seduced, like the apple we surrender to the consumer's benevolence. And thus, they slowly dissolve into their organism the sperms and the reproduction of an ancient nation," he concluded.

My fourth lecturer of the day was running on a full tank with no sign of exhaustion. I reminded him it was getting late and suggested we continue our conversation another time.

He abruptly stood up. "This is how these dragons survive," he exclaimed. He wrapped his scarf around his neck, wished me good night, and crossed the traffic in the dark to the opposite sidewalk and disappeared.

During my subway ride home, I recapped the three professors' presentations. The highlight of the evening was the young man's question.

I was satisfied that at least I had been able to treat him to a cup of coffee. I hoped his monologue had given him a chance to find the answers of his question.

Just a year ago, during the Azeri-Turkish invasion of Artsakh and Armenia, the words of the unknown student rang frequently in my ears. They still do.

That evening the Assyrian had come to the lecture to pick up remedies for his troubled nation. Infected by him, I now throb with the same pain. I also regret that the messenger remains still mysterious.

Picture in Teaser: ***Marduk and Tiamat,—representing the conflict of a storm god against a monster symbolical of primaeval chaos.***

There are no comments yet.