LETTER TO THE EDITOR: MR. ARMEN SARKISSIAN AND THE ARF

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By Revd. Nerses Vrej Nersessian, MassisPost.com 4 December 2020

"And behold, a greater than Solomon is here" (Matt.12:42)

Dear Editors,

I have heard the broadcast and read the text of the Armenian President on the crisis in Armenia and Artsakh, calling for the resignation of the Prime Minister, the only elected head of state by the people of Armenia. While the President has changed his tune smelling an opportunity to climb the greasy pool, the ARF is circulating a statement calling for the resignation of the Prime Minister in the name of the Diaspora. The Dashnak party has no legitimate authority or validation to make infallible-sounding **ex cathedra** pronouncements like the Pope of Rome does. Fortunately, neither the President nor the Dashnak Party have been endowed with these two dogmatic epithets (a) to make **ex cathedra** pronouncements and (b) assuming **infallibility**. As in the case of the President and now the ARF, by blustering chicanery scramble to power--a party that has governed a country for two years in the party's 100- year-old history: *Behold there is no salvation for the Armenian people outside the ARF* – like there is no' *salvation for the faithful of the Armenian Apostolic Church outside the Church of Rome* « Հռովմից դուրս չիք փրկութիւն». They lend themselves to mockery by inflaming the situation, joining the mob in Freedom Square, demanding the Prime Minister's resignation. Their jaw-dropping hypocrisy and arrogance beggar's belief. While the country is at war, the President travelled to every corner of the globe seeking support from foreign institutions, and returned empty-handed in total disgrace. Did he consult the Prime Minister or the Foreign Minister for his personal advancement? When he returned from his tours, did he meet the Prime Minister or the Foreign Minister to report to them the results of his self-seeking importance? Did he ever think that as President's his visit to the soldiers in the front, would have raised the moral wellbeing of the fighters?

As a seasoned diplomat, does he consider his contribution to this conflict as ambassador and President a success or a failure? For thirty years since the inception of independent Armenia, he has been a central figure in the diplomatic corps of the country and in that period, he failed to secure the support of any country, and most of all, his adopted country the United Kingdom of Britain and Northern Ireland. Like all the others he used his position to amass wealth, act as expert consultant on the Caucasus for British companies, for which he was handsomely rewarded by obtaining British citizenship. Since then, he has travelled to the countries of the Middle East whose source of oil supply is Baku. Is this an attempt to make sure that his consultation fees are not cancelled.

He has been the most malign figure in the present government. Every intervention of his in the political sphere has been negative – the gold mines of Amulsar, his nomination of a candidate to the Supreme Court, a figure who had twice been rejected on corruption charges. His intervention to establish an Armenian Embassy in Israel was the worst diplomatic decision. The ambassador of the Republic of Armenia, who when dismissed from his post assembled a crowd of his supporters whom he had convinced he was *irreplaceable,* lowers down the country's flag and hands it over to the

Chairman of the London Armenian Community. It is interesting that while the whole nation is calling for the return of the wealth robbed by the former two presidents, he has remained silent. Why? Is it that he does not agree with the nation or is it because he is part of the gang? He was appointed President by Serge Sarkissian, his patron. Thus, it is not surprising that Sarkissian will not speak against the former prime minister but seek the resignation of Pashinyan. The Prime Minister's actions will soon or later expose his corrupt dealings. His scurrilous bellicose polemic that the Prime Minister had not consulted has now been proved to be a dishonest and shameless lie. The Prime Minister had informed him of his decision. The President first called for his resignation then he changed his mind and now he is supporting him, smelling an opportunity to gain the favour of the population, hoping to present himself as the saviour of the country. Rather than passing pub strictures he should acknowledge his miserable failure as a diplomat.

In his speeches he continues to shamefully exploit the diaspora, but his words have been proved to be bluffs and fibs which have been condemned in the diaspora. When in 1999 a mob invaded the parliament building and murdered 8 parliamentarians among them Defence Minister Vazgen Sarkissian (who had sacked him as Prime Minister) he was in Moscow. This time around, when the mob was ransacking the Parliament building, Mr. Sarkissian was in Glendale. Armenia is not the 52nd state of the United States or a colony of the diaspora. Each time he speaks, he identifies himself and validates his pronouncements by appealing to the diaspora, forgetting that his foremost duty is to speak on behalf of the people of Armenia. He is the President of the Republic of Armenia. His posturing is cynical, self-indulgent, and insincere. To show his credibility, he constantly reminds the public that he is one of them and to prove that he once stood outside the presidential palace and distributed ice-cream. His parents were from Iran but he was born in Yerevan.

In the same vein, the ARF is a party that has no right or authority to seek the resignation of a prime minister. The only authority that can demand the resignation of the prime minister are those fathers ,mothers, sisters, and brothers who sent their sons and daughters to the front to fight the enemy. Patriotism requires sacrifice.

As a priest, I am very upset that the Catholicos, who came to the throne of St. Gregory the Illuminator on the day that a mob invaded the Parliament building and massacred the cream of Armenian political figures, should give his consent to a priest to stand in a square and call for the resignation of the Prime Minister. As Catholicos of All Armenians, instead of taking selfies on every possible occasion with the corrupt former two presidents, he should use his moral standing and call upon them to return their looted wealth.

The ARF has been part of the governing body. Is it not hypocritical of them to blame the prime minister for the tragedy? It is typical of a party with 100 years of history to always side with the minority and the Western powers rather than the nation. The first Armenian Republic was born out of chaos. The ARF committee, sitting in Tiflis, was given the power to run the country. It came into existence on 28 May 1918 and ceased to exist in November of 1920. In 1918 the entire nation came

together for the first time at the battle of Sardarabad to save the country from extinction. The first action of the infant republic was to make peace with Turkey by signing the infamous Treaty of Batum on 5th June. The Dashnak party clung blindly to the Allies but received nothing tangible in return. The Communists introduced Soviet rule, an action that at least forestalled the complete Turkish takeover of Armenia in April 1921.

Dashnak party members fled the country and began sabotaging activities in the diaspora, creating two conflicting factions: WE and THEM which continues to this day. The tension split the only institution that had protected and maintained the unity of the Armenian people for centuries-- the Armenian Apostolic Church. In 1956, the break in relations between the two church jurisdictions was sealed, exacerbated by the East-West divide of the *Cold War* in which the Dashnak party has played a leading role. The creation of the Third Republic gave hope that the two factions would unite. Even the installment of a key figure in the campaign of schism--Garegin II Sarkissian Catholicos of Cilicia to the throne of Holy Echmiadzin, failed to end the schism and bring reconciliation among church communities in the West, which is crucial if the destiny of newly-established independence was not to suffer the same destiny as the First Republic. For unknown reasons the Dashnak party assumes it is its God-given, *autocratic* right to govern the Armenian people and church.

Emperor Maurice of Byzantium (582-602) wrote to Khosrov the Persian king concerning Armenian princes and their troops: "*They are* a *perverse and disobedient race. They are between us and cause trouble. Now come. I shall gather mine and send them to Thrace. You gather yours and order them to be taken to the east. If they die, it's our enemies who will die; if they kill, they kill our enemies; but we shall live in Peace. For if they remain in their own land ,we shall have no rest*» . While this Machiavellian scheme to siphon off a significant percentage of Armenian military manpower was adopted by Byzantium, the Persian policy was to encourage Armenian nobles and their military followings to enlist by offering them substantial cash inducement to fight in their campaigns.

I am not at all surprised that Aram I, Catholicos of Cilicia would demand the resignation of the Prime Minister because he is a loyal, life serving member of the *Dashnak* party. He could not have done anything else. Since the independence of Armenia, the Armenian nation hoped that the Catholicos of Cilicia would come to terms with the fact that with the coming down of the Berlin Wall the Cold war was over. But the schism (հերձվածք) that began in the 1950's as a result of the anti Soviet Armenia Republic, with the collapse of the Soviet Union the two branches of the Armenian church would unite. I am afraid the opportunity in 1995 'to bring together the two factions of our motherland and church', has passed by without the realisation of the Armenian people.

The Armenian Church since the founding of the new republic is separate from the state. Garegin II is the Catholicos of All Armenians and he has no authority to demand the resignation of the Prime Minister on the behest of the entire Armenian nation. He is not the Catholicos of Etchmiadzin but represents the entire Armenian nation unlike Aram I who is catholicos of locality called Cilicia.

Time is needed to evaluate the leadership of the Prime Minister Pashinyan. Major world powers have drawn small Armenia into a dirty war of regional interests that will have long-lasting implications. We are witnessing the Balkanization of the Trans Caucasus. This is just the beginning of a process.

«ՆՇԱՆԱԻ ՍՈՒՐԲ ԵՒ ՊԱՏՈՒԱԿԱՆ ԽԱՉԻ ՔՈ՝ՀԱԼԱԾԵԱ ՉԵՐԵՒԵԼԻ ԵՒ ՉԱՆԵՐԵՒՈՅԹ ԹՇՆԱՄԻՆ Ի ՍԱՀՄԱՆԱՑ ՄԵՐՈՑ Ի ԲՆԱԿՈՒԹԵՆԵՍ ՄԵՐՄԷ»

Yours respectfully,

Revd. Nerses Vrej Nersessian

Comments

Marcus – 2020-12-21 04:44:32
The ARF never won more than 5% of the votes during various Armenia elections. So it joined the corrupt regime of Sargsyan to gain some power. Now it wants to smell power by sleeping with corrupt Sargsyan and Robert Kocharyan. And because it's piffle among Armenia's electorate, it makes statements through its sister organization in the Diaspora.

Bob Okhikian – 2020-12-20 21:26:21
We are one people, one nation: Armenian. Could we please unite and work all together for the good of our nation. I admire the Hebrew people of the world and their nation state of Israel and how united they are when it comes to their nation state of Israel. I am jealous, in a good way. I would like us to become like they are. Strong and united. Should we not learn from them how they do it and how good it is to be united and strong as they are. We can become like they are; we are fast learners , as they are , through our united stand as one Armenian people with one Armenian national state called Armenia. We should be proud to have a free and Democratic country of our own after centuries of domination by the Ottomans and we must stay united since union creates strength. Please don't act like little kids and keep fighting amongst yourselves but act like mature adults with responsibilities for your children, your people, and your nation, Armenia. Thanks for the opportunity. Sorry I don't mean to belittle anyone. May God Bless and protect Armenia, if we are not able to do it ourselves with harmony.

Avo – 2020-12-14 06:57:29
Dear Rev. Nerses, Please, FORGIVE most of those who demand the resignation of the elected Prime Minister, since they are Not Free.- they are merely following orders by their bosses, or safegarding their future financial interests. What matters, in the end, is ONLY the Will of the People of Armenia, reflected in Free Elections, whenever they happen. All else is Noise.

Patlamish – 2020-12-14 00:19:31
This does not sound like a new Keghart with new leadership but the same old Keghart with the same old bias.

Arous Maralan – 2020-12-13 15:38:46
Speaking the truth! The president and ARF are out for power. Plain and simple. Neither has expressed any constructive ideas on how to move forward other than just asking for resignation. ARF is losing credibility which is already lost in Armenia. I appreciate the historical notes in the article which help me understand the events in their proper context. Thank you for expressing what so many of us believe.

Dikran & Shenorig Vorperian – 2020-12-13 09:06:28
Sireli Der Nerses, thank you for this article which is TRUE TO THE CORE in every aspect. You are truly an honest and patriotic priest. My wife Shenorig also sends you her gratitude for your approach to our nation's difficult times. We are sure that with this unique article and many more to come, our youth all around will learn to think properly. Thank you once again and God bless you. Dikran & Shenorig Vorperian London

Hovanes Boyadjian – 2020-12-12 23:21:07
To Revd.Nersessian, You have spoken the painful truth. Diaspora 'leaders' have absolutly NO SAY in the politics of Armenia. I am 73 years old and have lived all my life outside of Armenia and I have seen only bickering and infighting among the 'parties'. I very strongly doubt that the opposition groups, the vehapar, Antilias, and the self appointed diaspora think tanks realise the mortal danger that Armenia faces at this moment. I have hoped in the past to witness Armenians united. You also, in this article, are crying out for unity. I am afraid it will remain a dream. I agree with your diagnostic.

VAHAKN VANOYAN – 2020-12-12 22:31:12
How true. Any time you have a country of three million population with 40 or more political entities that wants to govern without compromise is doomed to fail. We make great obedient citizens of any country outside of my beloved Armenia. DURING THIS CHRISTMAS I WILL be SINGING SILENT CHRISTIAN WORLD NAME OF THE FATHER AND ARMENIAN MARTYRS HOLY SPIRIT AMEN.

Hrayr – 2020-12-12 21:00:27
Comments like those in the above article by Rev. Nersessian give credence to opinions by some Armenians, that Armenians can never put their differences aside and unite for a common cause. It is really a shame that such comments come from a person of the cloth. Can we ever learn?

Vahe – 2020-12-12 20:14:00
Unfortunate, you are publishing this misleading article by a person who called himself Rev., This Rev. is left over from communist regime! There is no solution just a blame when we lost 5,000 solders life, thousands of injuries and more than 70% of Artsakh