

ON FOUNDING FATHERS; SOME THOUGHTS

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By Avedis Kevorkian, Philadelphia, PA, 27 March 2009

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Ever since I can remember, I have been fascinated by history and I even toyed with the idea of becoming a history teacher. But, journalism won out--especially because I was working on my father's newspaper and knew that I would become a journalist.

It was a wise move because, while journalism (it's now called "communications") was work, history could still be fun.. Except, that is, when the mind goes to work.

Most of the books that I buy have history, in one form or other, as the theme, and I enjoy, especially, reading about the founding of America and the (now growing larger) giants who created the country. Recently, I finished a book whose theme was what the Founding Fathers learned from Ancient Greece's Democracy and Ancient Rome's Republic.

They learned that while Democracy can be a great thing, too much democracy can be a bad thing and that it was the latter that ultimately led to the fall of Ancient Greece.

They learned that while a Republic can be a great thing, too much trust in the leader can be a bad thing and that's what led to the Fall of Rome.

Thus, with these lessons, coupled with the teachings of the French and English philosophers, the Founding Fathers set out on a New Experiment--they would combine what they saw as the best of Greece and of Rome, and would try to avoid the worst and the excesses of each. The result was the greatest country that has ever existed. Before anyone jumps on me, I will say that the recent history of the United States doesn't prove the Experiment wrong, but it may be the first stages in the decline of the country. Enough about the current mental midgets; let us get back to the Founders who knew Greek and Latin (and, with more than a few, Hebrew), and for the majority of whom their favorite writer was Cicero. (I wonder how many of those mental midgets in Washington have read Cicero. Dammit, there goes that mind again.)

What got my mind working along these lines was that reading through a mailing piece from a history-oriented book club, I read the descriptions of some of the books about some of the Founding

Fathers, and I realized how highly they are regarded, these 200 years later, and how we Americans, as children, were taught to respect and revere them--as most of us still do. I thought that if there were a Pantheon of Gods, America's Founders would be there. And then, as often happens to me, I stopped reading and stared into space as the mind played with those thoughts.

Eventually, it went from the sublime to the ridiculous; it went from Philadelphia to Yerevan. (Ah, you may have been wondering, when is he going to get there? I have arrived.)

I began to think of Armenia in the year 2209 and wondered, first, if there would be an Armenia in 2209. I reached no conclusion, because I was thinking that what all of Armenia's oppressors from the ancient Persians through to the Ottoman Turks could not do, the leaders of an Independent Armenia seem intent on doing. So, I quickly abandoned that thought.

I went back to what had started it all. I wondered if the children in that Armenia would be taught about the Founding Fathers of today's Armenia, and I wondered what they would be taught about them. I wondered if they would be taught to revere and respect their memory and I wondered if they would be lauded for creating a country as are the American Founding Fathers.

I compared presidents--America's first three and Armenia's first three. I compared how they got there--the elections of America and the elections of Armenia. Well, you get the point.

With Benjamin Franklin--the greatest of all Americans--dead (after seeing the American Republic born), George Washington, the Sword of the Revolution, was the most famous American. Patrick Henry, the Voice of the Revolution, was in a sulk, having decided that he didn't like what was going on. Tom Paine, the Pen of the Revolution, was in France supporting the French Revolution, having failed to foment one in Britain. (Speaking of Franklin. When the debates over the Constitution were getting nowhere, he rose to speak and, among other things, said, passionately, "Please, doubt your own infallibility." How those words should have been uttered during the last American administration!)

A unanimous choice for president, would Washington relinquish the post just because there was an election in 1796--during which he chose not to run, there being no law against a third term? In my view, the most important date in American history is March 4, 1797. On that day, President Washington walked into Congress Hall in Philadelphia, and President John Adams walked out. The first time in history where the office of chief of state was peaceably handed over--no death, no murder, no violence, no revolution, no conquest--by election. It proved the Constitution would work. The transfer complete, Washington was still the most famous American and, as the Congress was leaving the Hall, everyone stepped aside for him. He, in turned, stepped aside and said to Adams, "After you, Mister President."

And the country accepted its new president. There were no riots and demonstrations, no charges of corruption.

~~Oh, Yes, they made mistakes; they stumbled; they took risks--but all in their attempts to better the~~ fledgling Republic. They were, after all, men--"Plain, Honest Men" as a distinguished professor has labeled them in his book of that title--not the Gods they have now become. Admittedly, many of them were more than "plain," but "honest" all of them were.

But, with the Armenian leaders. . . .

What is it about the Armenians--or should I limit it to the Yerevantsis?--that they are incapable of learning from history and taking the best from it, incapable of holding honest elections, incapable of creating an honest government not run by crooks and thieves and thugs, indifferent to the needs of the vast majority of its citizens, indifferent to criticism by its vast Diaspora who wish the country well and wish to be proud of what some consider their "homeland" regardless of where they were born and where they live?

What would Armenia's children of 2209 be taught about their country's founders? Would these founders be installed in an Armenian Hall of Fame? Would they be elevated to the level of Gods and heroes, and installed in an Armenian Pantheon of Gods to be emulated and worshiped? Would the parents point to today's leaders and tell their children to work hard and become like the Founding Fathers? My shuddering at the those thoughts brought me back to the real world.

I went back to my reading. Then, a delicious thought occurred. Just as America has declined in recent years with the mental midgets now, apparently, destined to run things, suppose Armenia is doing the process in reverse. Suppose Armenia is starting with mental midgets and crooks and thieves and thugs now, and will produce its giants in 200 years!

Yes, I consoled myself. That's what is destined for Armenia.

Now, if only I can live that long to see it. I hope I won't run out of the snake-oil live-forever pills I bought from that strange-looking man, a while ago.

