PAN-ARMENIAN COUNCIL: PREVENTING SERIOUS PITFALLS

Posted on October 20, 2015 by Keghart

Category: Opinions

Z. S. Andrew Demirdjian, **Ph.D**., Los Angeles, 20 October 2015

The formation of a pan-Armenian council pertains to all Armenians, be they in Armenia, Artsakh, or the Diaspora and not just to a select group of people. Any movement name prefixed by the word "pan" signifies the Greek term for "all". Instead of announcing the meeting to form such an entity "all" Armenians in advance, several committees for the Armenian Genocide Centennial commemoration recently met in Yerevan and on Sept. 26, 2015 the Armenian Genocide Centennial State Committee unanimously adopted a resolution to establish a pan-Armenian council, according to Harut Sassounian's column in the Oct. 6, 2015 issue of "The California Courier".

Like myself, there are many individuals who have been genuinely interested in a pan-Armenian organization for many years. Yet, most of us were kept in the dark. It must have been an unannounced, closed circle event. Otherwise, some of us would have wanted to attend the meeting and had a voice in the discussions and decisions.

Z. S. Andrew Demirdjian, **Ph.D**., Los Angeles, 20 October 2015

The formation of a pan-Armenian council pertains to all Armenians, be they in Armenia, Artsakh, or the Diaspora and not just to a select group of people. Any movement name prefixed by the word "pan" signifies the Greek term for "all". Instead of announcing the meeting to form such an entity "all" Armenians in advance, several committees for the Armenian Genocide Centennial commemoration recently met in Yerevan and on Sept. 26, 2015 the Armenian Genocide Centennial State Committee unanimously adopted a resolution to establish a pan-Armenian council, according to Harut Sassounian's column in the Oct. 6, 2015 issue of "The California Courier".

Like myself, there are many individuals who have been genuinely interested in a pan-Armenian organization for many years. Yet, most of us were kept in the dark. It must have been an unannounced, closed circle event. Otherwise, some of us would have wanted to attend the meeting and had a voice in the discussions and decisions.

In one of my books, The Viability of a Worldwide Armenian Organization (c.2010), there's a chapter titled "The Advantages of Pan-Armenianism." Briefly stated, after having surveyed what other nations had done, my contention was that we should form a pan-Armenian organization right away for it had great advantages. A pan-Armenian organization would be the most effective way to reach out to all Armenians around the world. In so doing, Armenians would create solidarity with the various communities inhabiting far from one another to tackle issues of local and national interest to Armenians.

After all, solidarity defines pan-Armenianism; therefore, all Armenians should have equal chance to

participate in the formation of the council and all Armenians should have equal chance to serve on the council in order to advance the political, social, and economic interests of the community.

Furthermore, a pan-Armenian organization would enable us to cast the Armenian net as wide as the Diaspora has penetrated different parts of the globe by capitalizing on its common grounds and minimizing on its perceived differences. The benefits of a pan-Armenian council are too long to list.

Sadly enough, though, if an Armenian does not belong to a political, social, or cultural organization, he or she would be deprived from having the chance to participate in one of their events or activities despite his or her expertise. This has become a common practice for we still follow cave-dweller way of living. Besides, jealousy is so deeply ingrained in the persona of some Armenians that if another person is given the chance to participate, they fear that he might outshine them. So, they meet among themselves, among their cliques, clans, and oligarchs, and keep the neutral person out of their deliberations.

The practice of exclusivity, especially clannishness or isolationism, weakens a nation. It fails to reap the benefit of all the talents found in a community. How can this type of behavior be conducive to solidarity? Don't they perceive that it is counterproductive? The spirit of pan-Armenianism is solidarity, but without giving others a chance to participate in decision making that flies squarely in the face of cohesiveness. It's only our community that would suffer by acting clannishly and selfishly.

Had I attended the meeting, for example, I would have stressed the fact that we should keep a voice for neutral Armenians like most of our compatriots, who constitute the majority of the nation around the world. To forestall some pitfalls and to make the Pan-Armenian Council a viable entity, three intertwined, self-explanatory, essential conditions for success need to be observed: Democracy, Representation, and Independence.

I. While it is time-consuming and downright difficult, the council should include democratically elected members.
II. These council members should be representative of their various local communities.
III. These council members should be independent, both of government and large business.

Why do some organizations sprout, grow, adapt, succeed, and thrive while others never get off the ground? According to researchers in the growing field of organizational ecology, it is vital to look at the management in charge. If the beneficiary people are not included in the decision process, chances are the organization would face stiff challenges to be accepted. If the Pan-Armenian Council were not predicated on a system which gives all Armenians an equal chance to serve on the council, it would be another organization fraught with corruption, cronyism, nepotism, backstabbing, and empire building --eventually, balkanizing the council into contending and usually ineffectual factions. Obviously, representative council members who are chosen democratically by elections act rather independently for the good of the community -- and not as the servile arm of the

establishment.

In addition to ministerial appointees, the constitution of the council should be structured in such a way that it should set aside at least two-thirds of its seats for democratically elected people who would represent their local communities.

A Pan-Armenian Council should be primarily composed of our friends, family and members of the community because we are all affected when the government tries to take away our voice and replace it with ministerial appointees and business supporters. Councils that reflect local communities are better governed. They act as a critic and conscience in our society, independently able to challenge government and other organizations or groups and speak up on our behalf when they need to.

Ideally, the Pan-Armenian Council should be run by individuals rather than existing groups such as our political demagogue leaders or by government appointees. Any organization run by groups usually creates destructive competition, conflict, and corruption. Most seem to follow double standards at staggering hypocrisy. Thus, the majority of councils should be individuals coming from the masses and not from select groups only. An Ethiopian proverb packs a punch by stating: "When individual spiders unite, they can tie down a lion". The alternative saying? "A camel looks like a horse which was planned by a committee" (Anonymous).