LOST IN DISINFORMATION

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By B.C., Notes from a Yerevan professor's diary, December 2020

Turkish human rights activist *Fethiye Çetin often mentions the words of her Armenian grandmother, a survivor of Armenian Genocide: "Let those days go away and never come back." But similar days returned a century later. We, the inhabitants of Armenia, could not imagine that one day Turkish drones would appear in Yerevan's skies and mercenary*-terrorists would attack us, *and an Armenian-Turkic war would occur with thousands of victims and unforeseen destruction. Repeating a treacherous pattern (renouncement of the San Stefano Treaty, not stopping the Hamidian massacres of 1895, allowing the Armenian Genocide, and abandoning Armenian Cilicia), the "civilized" world remained indifferent to Armenia's plight while sometimes expressing "concern." At the same time, it hypocritically maintained parity between the aggressor and the victim while its media dispatched anti-Armenian reports during the 44-day war. To add insult to injury, its media presented the victim as the aggressor.*

After facing a national calamity of losing the war, losing people and land, we, in Armenia persuade ourselves that the war is over and normality will return without further victims and losses. We play this mental game although the blood appetite of our two Turkic neighbors remains unsated.

We worry the "small corridor" of Siunik will facilitate the pan-Turkic plans of Recep Tayyip Erdogan whom the "righteous" Western powers are reluctant to punish as they did other vicious dictators Saddam Hussein of Iraq and Moammar Kaddafi of Libya. Whether one considers pan-Turkism a conspiracy or fantasy, Turkey's aggressive intentions to be connected to Azerbaijan by land is not a recent development and is more than obvious. The "corridor" will mean further territorial losses to Armenia and the loss of our border with friendly Iran. But even friends disappoint: although Iran maintains Kosovo's "right to self-determination" it spun 180 degrees from that policy and "honored" Azerbaijan's "territorial integrity" concept meaning Artsakh belongs to Azerbaijan. What is "viva double standard" in Farsi?

Vulnerable South

The south has become our vulnerable spot. For some time now deeply worrying news has been coming from the province of Siunik in southern Armenia. However, as is typical in our post-war chaotic conditions, the credibility of the reports is questionable. Moreover, the disinformation comes from both sides—pro- and anti-Pashinyan. Some media show Siunik houses burning while the government media ensures us the images are of old videos and not even that of Siunik. Some media ring alarm bells about the "eviction of the Armenians of Siunik" while the government claims the opposite. A friend just back from Kapan says reports of the eviction are disinformation from the opposition to raise distrust for the government whom they brand "traitor" forgetting their own criminal inaction in the pre-Pashinyan decades. Today the prime minister announced there is no question regarding Siunik's "handover." He said what's happening is the re-confirmation of certain contact lines to return Armenia's border to what the international community recognizes as our borders. The issue at debate is the fate of some strategic heights. But many Armenians have

stopped believing the prime minister, recalling his and his spokesmen's rosy reports during the war and how he called Shushi "a grey city." People wonder whether there's any guarantee he would not call Siunik a "grey province." We are lost in disinformation and in mistrust. But fake news became common place a long time ago, and not only in Armenia.

A century ago, Siunik, a long-time center of Armenian culture, remained Armenian due to the valiant efforts of Garegin Nzhdeh and his fighters. Who will be nowadays Nzhdeh, to discourage the Turkic appetite for that essential part of our homeland? The enemy's greed covers all of Armenia, not to say the lands from Libya to Jerusalem and from the Balkans and Crimea to China… Viva territorial integrity. Viva double standard and the hypocrisy of international politics.

Traditional Split

As always, our population is split into two factions: those who consider President Vladimir Putin as Armenia's savior and those who believe our catastrophe is the result of the familiar Russo-Turkic dirty political game. Those who condemn Putin say he did not "save" Armenians for their "beautiful eyes" or in the spirit of Christian solidarity (when Putin mentioned the tragic history of Armenia and the need to protect its sacred sites, he tellingly said "Christian" and not "Armenian" sites). By keeping part of Artsakh, he strengthened his positions in South Caucasus. He then strengthened the anti-Putin faction by declaring Artsakh was part of Azerbaijan.

Russia, which officially calls itself Armenia's strategic partner, has never acted like one. Russia always "rescued" Armenia when the latter could not resist the "Big Brother of the north." Russian agents in Armenia spread false news and steer the positive energy in the wrong direction. Even if it was not announced, everybody understands it was Russia that prohibited Armenia from using the deadly "Iskandar" it had sold to Armenia, as well as the SU military airplanes that it sold without ammunition. Prof. Stephan Astourian, in his insightful analysis of the war, hinted at it in a video interview.

It is obvious that the post-war chaos is favorable to all sides. The "opposition" manipulates the chaos to regain power. Its front man is Vazgen Manukyan, a quasi-intellectual, avuncular, half-forgotten, and ill-reputed political corpse. Chaos helps Azeris to claim more territory.

During the past 30 years, Russia did not allow a real political change in Armenia. Armenia also could not conduct a nation-oriented policy during relatively peaceful conditions to develop and strengthen the country. Just the opposite occurred: the corruption and chaos in all spheres caused this shameful calamity. Now, even not-so-Russia-friendly Armenians believe Armenia should become a distant Russian province to guarantee its existence: regression to Armenia's political status under the brutal regime of Tsar Nicholas I in early 19th century.

Comments

Bob Okhikian – 2020-12-23 18:49:52

I am western educated and oriented, and it's my preferred way of life, but there's a proverb that says a neighbour who lives near you is better than a brother who lives far from you. Russia is Armenia's neighbour and as the good old proverb says, your closest neighbour is your best defender, and,as logic, it makes sense. Being pragmatic makes sense. Politics is sometimes more advantageous that war. You win by not losing young people at war. When Armenia's rulers were friends of Putin, no one dared touch it. This says something and it is for the wise to learn. We are surrounded by enemies and we need and can use all the help we can get, BUT, as nothing is for free, we have to pay the price to survive. Think judiciously and pick your choice. Zohrab