RUSSOPHOBES, RUSSOPHILES, AND NONSENSE

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Editorial, 8 December 2013

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The pro-Putin group claimed the CU is an economic club where everyone is equal, while the EU is an "asymmetric form of interaction"; the CU is a purely economic alliance, while the EU has a strong political element. They underlined that Armenia would be exporting value-added goods to the CU, while its exports to the EU would be raw commodities. They went on to point out that 82% ($1.4 billion) of remittances to Armenia originated in Russia.

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The Russophiles also said that Russia would cancel the 35% on oil price to Armenia, and sell gas at $189 per thousand cubic meters from the current $270. Moscow would also sell weapons to Armenia at Russian domestic prices. They mentioned that Russia will provide humanitarian assistance to Armenia, Armenia will work with Russia to build Armenia's first satellite in three years and bring the once-famous Pyuragan Observatory up to modern standards. Edouard Sharmazanov, a parliamentary vice-speaker and spokesman of the ruling Republican Party, was quoted saying that he appreciated the results of Putin's visit and that Armenia citizens "will feel positive results of the visit."

The anti-Putin group, spearheaded by the "Lragir" newspaper, was richer in data. The group said that Putin had refused to fund the Iran-Armenia railway, the North-South Highway, or a new nuclear power plant. Some linked Putin's lack of support for the last project to his supposed promise to Recep Erdogan so as to get Turkey's green light for the $20-billion nuclear power plant Russia

wants to build in that country. The group also pointed out that Putin did not say whether Russia would intervene in case of Azeri aggression.

Igor Muradyan and Naira Hayrumyan of "Lragir" were perhaps the most vociferous, graphic, and cutting anti-Russia duo. In an article titled "Serzh Sargsyan Prepares Handover of Armenia" (Dec. 3), Muradyan wrote that Armenia's decision to join the CU will result in the country's "full voluntary disappearance from global politics… Serzh Sargsyan is preparing the social basis for officially giving up our national sovereignty, as well as 'handover' of their own selves by their sympathizers…The CU is a colonization instrument." He added: "Russia is a dirty ditch full of betrayal and destruction, it drags us into a marsh and there is no sparkle of hope." He concluded by saying, "… Russians are stating bluntly that they will take under control the normalization of relations of Armenia with Turkey and Azerbaijan."

Hayrumyan was no less combative. She wrote that Putin's visit "confirmed the occupation of Armenia and left the gates ajar for the invaders to get in…Serzh Sargsyan gave everything away to Putin…the last 20% of ARG shares, oil monopoly, the right to make presidential decisions…"

Barouyr Hayrikyan, the leader of the National Self-Determination party, said that the entry to the Customs Union is the most humiliating step in Armenia's history. He added that "semi-democratic Armenia will become a dictator country like the other CU member states." Some critics also dug up the 1895 quote by the foreign minister of tsarist Russia who said that Russia wanted an Armenia without Armenians. Meanwhile there were rumors that imperial Putin wanted to rename Gyumri Alexandrapol, after one of the tsars.

The painful fact is the comments and speculations of the Russophiles and Russophobes are fact-based, although that of the anti-group are drenched in emotion. Armenia will receive the benefits the pro-group foresees, but it will also become less of a sovereign state. Its economy and its foreign policy will be decided in Moscow. Tiny Armenia could become a colony of Moscow, especially now that Russia has more than a million "hostage" Armenians.

However, the critics inexplicably ignore Mazlow's Pyramid or the theory of hierarchy of needs. Accordingly, the most fundamental human need is security of body and health. This fact applies to nation as well. Armenia is threatened by the Turkbeijan duo. To guarantee its survival, Armenia needs the military support of Russia. America will not send its marines to rescue Armenia; Europe has no army to deliver Armenia.

Why are we in this existential dilemma?

The first reason we are in this vise is because of the implacable hostility of the Turks in our east and west. The blockade has isolated us in more ways than economically. The Azeri military threats have forced Armenia to spend on its military money it can't afford.

The second reason is to be found in Shakespeare's "Julius Caesar": "The fault, dear Brutus, lies not in

our stars, but in ourselves."

Since independence, we've had three governments. All three have been corrupt, incompetent or both. Under Der-Bedrossian, Kocharian and Sargsyan we watched Armenia become supine, frail, disillusioned, mismanaged, impoverished…and shrink from a population of 3.5 million to slightly more than 2 million. The above reasons have also resulted in disillusionment in the Diaspora.

We should not blame Putin for our sorry state. He is the leader of a foreign country with an imperial past and dreams of a new empire. His job is to look after the interests of Russia, not of Armenia. If he takes advantage of our weakness, it was Armenia's responsibility not to place itself in this vulnerable state. In the words of Kurken Arsenyan, chairman of the United Workers' Party and member of the Prosperous Armenia parliamentary group: "Putin didn't arrive to protect our national interests. The Armenian side must protect our national interests."

What's the point of boasting that we have lasted for at least 4,500 years (while empires around us have bitten the dust)? What's the point in having an independent state when we are seemingly incapable of managing it? Will Serzh Sargsyan be the grim steward who will oversee Russia's colonization of Armenia? Do the people of Armenia, now drowning in misery, have the ability to salvage our homeland or is it too late?

The Diaspora can't solve Armenia's problem.

The Armenian government has shown no inclination to lift Armenia from the mire.

The citizens of Armenia are the only party which has a chance to put the country on the right tract. This admittedly is expecting too much from a demoralized, disillusioned, impoverished, and shrunken populace. Unfortunately, for all of us, there is no other positive change maker in sight.