THE PROTOCOLS AND THE POLITICAL TRIO: TER-PETROSSYAN, HOVANNISIAN AND VOSKANIAN

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By Appo Jabarian, Executive Publisher / Managing Editor, USA Armenian Life Magazine, 10 September 2009

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Several Armenian political groups have articulated their position vis-à-vis the protocols. Interestingly, the political trio of the former President Levon Ter-Petrossyan, the two former Foreign Ministers, Raffi Hovannisian, and Vardan Voskanian have jockeyed around for positions on Armenia-Turkey Protocols in order to gain political mileage.

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Ter-Petrossyan's Armenian National Congress generally welcomed the initialed documents reminding the readers about his weak position as president regarding several important issues, such as the international recognition of the Armenian Genocide, territorial claims against Turkey, Artsakh's right to self-determination, among others.

It's kind of odd that at this 11th hour, the former Foreign Minister, Deputy of the National Assembly, and founder of Heritage Party Raffi Hovannisian has vacated his Parliament seat as of September 7 as "a sign of disagreement with the recent developments in the foreign policy of Armenia." The parliament is the place where Mr. Hovannisian's presence could be very effective in debating and opposing the protocols, yet Mr. Hovannisian has chosen to be absent and effectively silence his voice in Armenia's National Assembly.

As for the former Foreign Minister Vardan Voskanian, he has penned a commentary catering to the current political demand both in Armenia and the Diaspora. Voskanian's Sept. 8 article, titled "Getting This Wrong Will Be Unforgivable," exhibits the stark contrast between Voskanian the former Foreign Minister and Voskanian heading the opposition Civilitas Foundation.

Voskanian should be the last person to criticize the "Road Map" protocols, because he was one of Armenia's main foreign policy architects of the time (2007) when the infamous Madrid Principles were negotiated. Furthermore, for many years he carried out secret negotiations with various Turkish officials leading to protocols of 2009.

Several readers remember very vividly the anti-Armenian statements made by Voskanian during his tenure as Foreign Minister of Armenia. Did Mr. Voskanian "conveniently" forget the indignation that he caused a few years ago in Armenia, Artsakh, and the Diaspora, when he expressed willingness to "hand" the liberated Armenian Karvadjar in Artsakh to Azerbaijan, and even thought it's worthwhile to consider to hand Meghri, Armenia to Azerbaijan?

Before Ter-Petrossyan, Hovannisian and Voskanian claim to represent the Armenian opposition, they should make every effort to genuinely adopt the basic principles of Armenia's foreign policy issues that deserve just solution such as Genocide recognition and territorial demands from Turkey. Messrs. Ter-Petrossyan, Hovannisian and Voskanian must help Armenia's leaders mitigate the exact extent of the disastrous consequences of the Protocols.

They should be reminded that before Armenia signs the protocols with Turkey, Ankara must withdraw its unjust demands that 1) Armenia shall no longer hold any territorial claims against Turkey by recognizing the current Armenian-Turkish borders; that 2) Armenia shall give up the pursuit of Karabagh's self-determination; that 3) Armenia should return Artsakh to Azerbaijan.

Armenia shall not capitulate to this latest unjust Turkish conditionality that aims to substantially weaken Armenia-Artsakh. Armenia should remind Turkey that the forcibly occupied lands in Eastern and Western Armenia and Cilicia must be returned to their rightful owners, the Armenians in Armenia-Artsakh, and the Armenians in the Diaspora who continue to be dispersed around the world. The Armenian leadership and the people in Armenia and the Diaspora should not fall in the Turkish trap. And the genuine opposition shall exercise its rights by being loyal to the interests of the Armenian state; by fending off the political dangers that threaten Armenia's viability as a secure and prosperous sovereign state