TIME FOR OSKANIAN TO PUT HIS CARDS ON THE TABLE

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Aram Adamyan, Toronto, 14 October 2012

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In his parliamentary speech Oskanian expressed his concern in the RoA phenomenon of the persecution of political opponents. It can happen to other politicians in future. This is only half the truth. He is not the first person to be persecuted for political activities in Armenia. He has also never expressed his concern for the persecution of others in Armenia. Had he publicly condemned the persecution of political opponents of the government, he might not have faced his current problems. Many have tried to understand Oskanian's silence when Kocharian's regime was harassing its opponents and expanding the power of an oligarchic economic system.

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Four years ago, during the March 1 events, when Oskanian was minister of foreign affairs of Armenia, he sided with the oppressive regime. Today, after experiencing huge disappointment with Levon Ter-Petrosyan, I am speculating whether Oskanian, cognizant of the two evils, chose the lesser. He probably had grounds for this assumption that Ter-Petrosyan would not be able to bring the changes needed in our country. Moreover, the first president would harm the country's foreign policy.

This is just a speculation. But we have to acknowledge that in case Ter-Petrosyan re-emerged as president and faced the same fiasco as he had in the post of opposition leader (left with nearly no

followers and supporters), Armenia would have been in much worse condition than it is now. So Oskanian probably served Kocharian's regime with not much personal satisfaction in the internal policy but his justification was that the alternative would have been worse for the country.

Whatever his allegiances or take on the Ter-Petrossian and Kocharian rivalry, Oskanian was never involved in corrupt business activities, unlike other ministers. Furthermore, Oskanaian's Civilitas, especially through its online TV channel Civilnet and independent of the regime's TV, has been very helpful, by the introduction of fresh ideas and political style, to the development of a civil mind of the Armenian society.

According to many, Prosperous Armenia party, founded and led by oligarch Gagik Tsarukian, is under the actual control of Kocharian who created it in the last years of his presidency to have a platform for a return to power. This party lacks an ideology to be called a real political party and largely consists of the same type of regime-fed members as the ruling Republican Party. Thus Oskanian is an asset for Prosperous Armenia to eventually acquire political and ideological features. Oskanian, on the other hand, had his own interests to join Prosperous Armenia. Adhering to this party could be another attempt to bring a positive outcome and offer alternative solutions even if that means the cooperation of an ambiguous organization, making use of an established structure and its resources. However, many believe that Kocharian is behind the decision of Oskanian to join the Prosperous Armenia. In any case, Oskanian with his style and experience is so alien to Prosperous Armenia that he may decide to leave that party, unless he is given full control.

Oskanian may have joined the party thus drawing a parallel with the transformation witnessed with the Republican Party of Armenia that currently has nothing in common with the original party established and run by Soviet-era dissident Ashot Navasardyan and now controlled by Serzh Sargsyan. If Oskanian succeeds in transforming the Prosperous Armenia into a real political party he might be able to justify why he joined it. However,if he joined the party not by choice but rather because of Kocharian's order then his image, knowledge, experience and personal safety are being served to bring back a regime that is no better than the current one--at least in its internal policy.

There is a huge lack of transparency in this battle between the old and current regimes in Armenia. Every such encounter instead of being a debate over ideas ends up in the persecution of the older ones by the current rulers. In this regard, irrespective of whether Oskanian represents himself or Kocharian, it should never have resulted into a criminal prosecution we are witnessing. Oskanian on his turn has to explain publicly why he was silent while others were going through the same experience. Finally, the Armenian Diaspora should be persistent and consistent in its defense of human rights in Armenia. The Diaspora, while actively raising its voice in support of Oskanian, has to condemn every political persecution in Armenia, rather than act only when the person suffering has a Diasporan origin.