

"WE ADMIRE ARMENIANS IN ALL THINGS BUT ONE"

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Minas Kaynakjian, [hetqonline](#), 10 August 2010



The other day on Armenian TV, there was a program dealing with the two visits of Yasser Arafat to Armenia back in the 70' and 80's. Arafat would spend several hours in Yerevan on his way from Beirut to Moscow for consultations with the leaders of the Communist Party.

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According to the program, the Armenian elite at the time hosted their famous guest with all the trappings of Armenian hospitality. The two sides were quick to make parallels between the two peoples, Armenians and Palestinians. Arafat even went so far to confess that he even exhorted his people to be more like Armenians – in terms of their industriousness and love of country.

Arafat is alleged to have told the Armenians that there was one thing he would never tell his people to copy from the Armenian experience. The Armenian delegation at the VIP transit lounge became anxious and more than a bit concerned. What did the leader of the Palestinian national movement have in mind?

Arafat got up and said that Armenians, after being evicted and exiled from western Armenia, took foreign citizenship and started to accumulate wealth and property in their newly adopted countries. This, he pointed out, lead Armenians to forget about the country they had lost, western Armenia. Palestinians, he stressed, would never become citizens of any Arab nation they were living in for this very reason.

Is there any truth in what Arafat said? Have Armenians given up on the dream of returning to their occupied homeland for the very reasons cited by Abu Ammar? Has the accumulation of material wealth and property in foreign lands served as a substitute for the lands that 95 years ago constituted the bulk of the Armenian homeland?

A number of interesting recent incidents lend informal support to this thesis.

We have the results of a 2009 Gallup Poll in Armenia suggesting that Armenians yearn to leave Armenia, many for good. It would appear that Armenians would prefer to migrate than to stay and build a new nation. Any notion of re-establishing an Armenian presence to the west of the Araks River, given this reality, remains the purview of fanciful imagination.

I constantly read many Armenians, supposed political experts, talk about the need to support Armenian claims to the 'lost lands' in various international tribunals based on the Treaty of Sevres – a dead diplomatic document to be sure. There have been many in the diaspora, over the years, clinging to such ridiculous hopes. They have inculcated the youth under their sway to do the same.

Now I read that young people in Armenia are being similarly brainwashed as well. In Yerevan, they will be marching on the 90th anniversary of the Treaty of Sevres calling on the embassies of the United States, France and Italy to "remember" their promises made to the Armenian people in 1920. These are the same Great Powers that conveniently sold Armenia down the drain in the face of a resurgent nationalist Turkey. It seems we haven't learnt any lessons from the past.

The organizers of such events would do better to tell the youth to march on the Presidential Palace and have Sargsyan declare Armenia's recognition of the NKR.

Why some still cling to such myths is baffling. To urge young people to take part in such foolish folly is even worse. It displays just how lacking Armenians are when it comes to drafting a political program based on the realities of the day.

When it comes to drafting a comprehensive national political platform, we Armenians, either in the diaspora and the RoA, have not yet been able to agree on what it is we want and are willing to struggle for. We have no set of defined national goals and thus seemingly flip-flop on a host of issues due to the political exigencies of the day.

Then too, we lack any national leaders, with the vision and drive to rally the people. Do we need an Armenian Arafat? Sure, Arafat was a petty despot in his own right and his Fatah movement bilked the Palestinian people out of millions, but what if we could conjure up someone like him, stripped of the negative tendencies.

Levon Ter-Petrosyan wouldn't do. He puts people to sleep with his analyses that stretch for hours at a time. He also doesn't believe that democratic change should come from below, from the people in the street. "Go home and do not worry. We will take care of everything". This was LTP's advice to the people at every post 2008 rally. The people have no part to play in the movement; it's those at the top who know best. This ain't democracy.

Serzh Sargsyan? The current president and drafting a national strategic plan of action seem mutually exclusive. The man just lacks the vision and personal drive.

When was the last time any Armenian public leader actually addressed the people, setting out their vision of where they wanted to take the nation in the next ten years? The only time you'll see our "leaders" make such a half-hearted attempt is after winning the next in a series of fraudulent elections. No wonder the people are apt to disbelieve what their leaders say and no wonder such officials lack the legitimacy to steer Armenia into the brave new world of the 21st century.

We need someone, or a group of 'someones', who will speak out on the pan-Armenian issues of the

exodus from the RoA, diaspora repatriation, the rebuilding of the national economy, participatory democracy and the rule of law, halting the environmental pillage of Armenia, a foreign policy based on justice and national interests, the reunification of Artsakh with Armenia, and pooling the resources of Armenians worldwide in the cause of nation-building.

Who then? The nation awaits your list of potential candidates.

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