WESTERN ARMENIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS--ARROGANCE GONE WILD

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Category: Opinions

By Avedis Kevorkian, Philadelphia, PA, 2 January 2010

More than a year after the American elections, there are still some people who are fighting the result of November 2008--if the messages that I am sent and forwarded are anything to go by. I no longer tell the senders to get a life and do something useful, but I do read some of the messages, now and then, and continue to be fascinated by them.

I don't receive any messages from Armenians still lamenting the death of the first Armenian republic, in 1920, but I knew they were still around. Now, I have proof, with the report from the "Western Armenian National Congress" .

Obviously, word never reached me in the cave in which I was living, but it has been around for a couple of years, and its aim is to impose itself on the government--any government, apparently--in Yerevan under the assumption that the Diaspora has a right to not only intrude itself in the government of the "homeland" but also actually be part of and more-or-less dictate to Yerevan.Admittedly, I am not the brightest candle on the cake, but I know of no other diaspora with the conceit that it has a right to be part of a government of a country in which it does not live.

A visit to the web-site of the Western Armenian National Congress --for it is the organization under discussion--explains (in a difficult-to-understand translation of what I assume was a better-written original Armenian) the group's reason for being is "On the assumption that. . .the modern Republic of Armenia. . .on the territory of the Soviet Armenia which is twice smaller than the territory of the first Republic of Armenia, de jure is not the successor of the first republic AND IS NOT AUTHORIZED BY THE WESTERN ARMENIAN REPRESENTATIVE AGENCIES to represent their rights. . . ."

Notice the conceit: because the present republic is smaller than the first, some western Armenians have decided that the present republic is not a true successor to the first and, therefore, isn't qualified--"authorized"--to represent Armenia's interests. These diasporans have decided that they are authorized--notice their self-description "Western Armenian Representative Agencies"--to speak for the Armenians. I don't recall giving any of them my mandate. (Should I comment that since the present Republic of Turkey is smaller than the Ottoman Empire, it, too, isn't a true successor? In which case, may I presume that no territorial or other claims can be made against today's Turkey?)

Should one ask now or later if these western organizations are the same ones that ill-served the Armenians for the past 120 years and failed to make a success of the first republic?

In furtherance of their efforts, WAN-C has issued what appears to be a proclamation alerting the world to a forthcoming "Western Armenian Congress." In it, WAN-C says that the Western Armenians "are the main source for the secure and efficient function of the present Republic of Armenia." The first comment is to ask "who said so?" and the second is "if I were connected in any way with the crooks and thieves and thugs who are running (I keep having to be sure not to type "ruining") Armenia, I would keep very silent and not boast of it."

The statement then says that "Western Armenians, however, do not have an organizational capacity nor coordination mechanisms DESPITE the existence of a multitude of associations, organizations and political parties." What WAN-C fails to realize is that this failure is BECAUSE of the myriads of "association, organizations and political parties." We are to believe that if, let us say, there are 20 of these groups that cannot do anything effective, 21 will. Does the word "arrogance" come to mind?

WAN-C, we are told was created in 2006. Was its purpose to eliminate all the other bodies that have proven to be ineffective? No. It would appear, like the good Armenians they are, they decided to add yet another organization to the Armenian collection.

It would appear that this Congress will distribute "responsibilities and roles between the Western Armenians and the Republic of Armenia." Think of it; the Diaspora is going to assign Yerevan its tasks! If the word "arrogance" didn't come to mind, above, does it come to mind now?

In another long hard-to-decipher paragraph, there is a reference to ". . .occupation of the Armenian Republic, its violent sovietization, partitioning, deprivation of sovereignty. . . ." Apparently, this new group will undo the past. Apparently, also, WAN-C thinks that the "sovietization" of Armenia was a bad thing. What they obviously don't want to admit is that the sovietization was the best thing to have happened to Armenia--and I will argue that point with all comers!. As an independent country, small and poor, abandoned by the West (remember no one wanted a League of Nations Mandate for the country), it would not have survived invasion from Kemalist Turkey, and certainly would not have survived World War II--the Turks would have used that war to finish the job it didn't have time to do in World War I. It is the fact that there was a Soviet Armenia that there is now a Republic of Armenia--for these people in the Diaspora to want to run from afar.

In another convoluted sentence that almost defies comprehension, the statement says: "The thesis that the Armenians were doomed to Genocide and nothing depended on strategy and tactics of national liberation movement, on way of thinking and behavior of national leaders is a strained myth." If the meaning is that the "national liberation movements"--that is, the creation and activities of the so-called "political" parties of the late 19th century--had no bearing on the Hamidian massacres and the Young Turk Genocide, then my advice to the authors of that statement is to stop smoking what they have been because it is affecting their brains. It can be argued--and I certainly will--that the Armenian "political" parties did the Armenians no good in the 19th century, no good in the pre-Genocide 20th century, no good in the post-Genocide 20th century, and no good into the 21st century.

From their cafes and garrets in Berlin, Geneva, Paris, Moscow, and Constantinople and Smyrna and, possibly, Tiflis, these nationalists were too busy believing that the West would support them, they forgot to speak anytime with the Anatolian Armenians and ask themselves what the Turks would do to them. But, competing with themselves then--as they do now--they were blind to the fact that the West at best pays lip-service to the Armenians, and would do nothing to stop the 1894/96

massacres (and certainly wouldn't punish the Turks), would do nothing to help the Armenians at that foolish Constantinople Bank episode (and would fail to punish the Turks for the deaths that followed), and would do nothing to prevent the Adana killings, though their ships will be in the harbor (and certainly would not punish the Turks), so why was no one surprised that nothing was done to prevent the 1915 Genocide? My views still stand, even if I have misunderstood that sentence--after more than a dozen re-readings of it.

In another of those convoluted and almost incomprehensible paragraphs there is reference to ". . .conservation and development of Armenian life (culture, education, economics) in Soviet Armenia in spite of criminal totalitarian antinational regime destroying national, spiritual life. . . ." Apparently, one part of Soviet Armenia was building Armenia and another part of Soviet Armenia was destroying Armenia. Yes, it would appear that just as some Right-wingnuts are still fighting November 2008, in this country, so, too, are there Armenians still fighting 1920.

WAN-C's aim is to create the mechanisms to provide for the "full-fledged participation of the Armenian Diaspora. . .the biggest and the most significant part of the nation, in restoration and perspective development of the Armenian nationhood." From its relative comfort and ease and prosperity, the Diaspora is going to help run Armenia. If the word "arrogance" didn't come to mind above, does it come to mind, now?

Invitations will be sent out soon for the Congress in Paris. Somehow, I never received the invitation to the founding Congress in 2006. It probably fell behind the sorting table at my local Post Office. I will have to pay a visit and alert them to an impressive-looking envelope from France. I certainly don't want to miss the experience of listening to a group of self-appointed, self-serving egotists whose heads are firmly affixed backwards.