ARMENIA - FROM PAST TO EUROPEAN FUTURE

Intervention by Mr WALTER SCHWIMMER
Secretary General
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Seven years ago, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe adopted Recommendation 1247 (1994). The Recommendation read: “In view of their cultural links with Europe, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia would have the possibility of applying for membership provided they clearly indicate their will to be considered as part of Europe”. This proposition was an invitation to the South Caucasian States to remember, rethink and rebuild their European roots and identity.

At that time, the Russian Federation was still two years away from membership. Russia joined the Council of Europe in 1996. Georgia followed in 1999 and, in January 2001, Armenia and Azerbaijan completed the membership as regards the Caucasus region.

The Caucasus is now part of Europe. We often speak about European family of democratically minded nations, about European, or Council of Europe standards. But what it is to be European? What is the meaning of Europe in the 21st century?

Seen from this conference room, the Europe of Paris, London, Berlin may seem impossibly prosperous and peaceful. Let me remind you that Europe of 1949, when the Council of Europe was created, was quite different: war-torn cities, ruined economy and uncertain future. Fear and hatred of the neighbour were deeply rooted in holocaust memories.

The Council of Europe was created as a reaction to the horrors of war. What was the remedy? Respect for Human Rights, pluralistic democracy and the Rule of Law. These were the principles enshrined in Article 3 of the Statute. And Strasbourg, long the centre of bitter Franco-German conflicts, was chosen as the headquarters or the Organisation.

I invite you to pause and think for a moment: the guns of the Second World War went silent on 9 May 1945. Less than four years later, on 5 May 1949, the Statute of the Council of Europe was signed. Now imagine that on 5 May 1998, less than four years after the Armenian-Azerbaijan cease-fire of 9 May 1994, a regional Organisation for the respect of Human Rights, democracy and the rule of law was created and the town of Shushi, was chosen for its seat.

That is the meaning of Europe. Perhaps not everybody saw that back in 1949, but today there is no doubt: Europe is all about renouncing war, once and for all - also in the minds of political establishment and the public. Europe is all about reconciliation, assuming past history, learning how to live with one’s neighbours, accepting and enjoying diversity.

Armenia is the State with the biggest Diaspora in the region. Armenians have long ago learned to accept diversity, giving priceless contribution to many nations and many cultures in Europe and in the world. (Last weekend the world was watching a new contender playing on Centre court in Wimbledon: David Nalbandian). Therefore Armenia should take the lead in the region, showing to your neighbours that it is possible to be tolerant, that difference and diversity can be not only divisive, but much more importantly - enriching.
Արամ Ակինջյան
Արարատի գրասենյակ քարտուղար
9 հուլիսի 2002, Երևան, գրիմետ

Օրեր տարերի առաջ (1994 թ.) Երևայի գրասենյակի գույքիմական շարժման ընդունմանը, տիրական առկանքը, «Հայաստան» եղբայրական Ժամանակագրություն, տեղեկատվություն և նորաձևության միջազգային խորանարդումը բազմազանության մեջ պատկանող իրավունքների զարգացման ոլորտն էր: Այս շարժման ճանաչումը Երևայի գրասենյակի ճգնաժամը 1996-ին, ինչպես այն մտավ, այս արդյունքներին կապված էր նոր շարժման շատ կարևոր անդամներին։

Այս շարժման հիմնականության լինելուց հետո, Ակինջյան, Երևայի գրասենյակի առաջնորդը նրա պատմության շաքարատեսիլ մասին առանձնացնում է հիմնականությունը։ Այս շարժումը հետևած էր այսօրվա այն պատճառներից, որոնց ընթացքում անհրաժեշտ էր շարժման շարունակական աջակցություն։

Արամ Ակինջյանը Պարգևած Արարատ գրասենյակի առաջնորդն էր, որը առաջին քայլներին ենթարկվել է եւ ուսումնաֆիլիական կազմակերպությունների մեջ։ Այս շարժման գործողությունների ընթացքում Ակինջյանը մասնակցել է շատ համաձայնագրական գործոնների մեջ։

Այս շարժումը հիմնականությունը նրա պատմության շաքարատեսիլ մասին առանձնացնում է հիմնականությունը։ Այս շարժումը հիմնականությունը նրա պատմության շաքարատեսիլ մասին առանձնացնում է հիմնականությունը։ Այս շարժումը հիմնականությունը նրա պատմության շաքարատեսիլ մասին առանձնացնում է հիմնականությունը։ Այս շարժումը հիմնականությունը նրա պատմության շաքարատեսիլ մասին առանձնացնում է հիմնականությունը։ Այս շարժումը հիմնականությունը նրա պատմության շաքարատեսիլ մասին առանձնացնում է հիմնականությունը։

Արամ Ակինջյանի այսպիսի հիմնականությունները նրա պատմության շաքարատեսիլ մասին առանձնացնում է հիմնականությունը։ Այս շարժումը հիմնականությունը նրա պատմության շաքարատեսիլ մասին առանձնացնում է հիմնականությունը։ Այս շարժումը հիմնականությունը նրա պատմության շաքարատեսիլ մասին առանձնացնում է հիմնականությունը։
In one generation's time, the Caucasus could be different. I am told that many young Armenians - I hope not all of them - are proud to serve in the military forces and are willingly spending time lying in trenches and watching "the enemy" through the visor of their weapons. Perhaps, back in 1949, there were some young people in Europe willing to do the same. Today, no one, young or old, would not even think - let alone taking arms, but even to giving away one afternoon of their time for rallying against "the enemy"...

Even without detailed knowledge of history, a look at the map is quite convincing; with Nagorno-Karabakh and Nakhichevan, with their interspersed and mixed populations, Armenia and Azerbaijan are tied together like Siamese twins. Politically, Armenia - as well as Azerbaijan - must accept this fact. As late as last year it was manifested in the "joint Council of Europe accession option", chosen by all our member States.

Trying to separate Siamese twins by the sword will inevitably lead to death for both. Armenia and Azerbaijan have only one future - to live together, as one organism, as two neighbours separated by borders, which will have lost all meaning in everyday life, as two states within the larger European family.

This is what has been happening in Europe, earlier or later. France and Germany have led the way. Others followed. Border controls on the Bridge of Europe, connecting Strasbourg and Kehl, are now dismantled.

My own country, Austria, had a longstanding dispute over a region in the North of Italy. It is known as South Tyrol (Tyrol is a province in Austria) or as Alto Adige (Adige is a river in Italy). Throughout the historic dispute, the Brenner Pass between Austria and Italy was seen as having strategic defence value.

Nowadays the Brenner Pass provides the landscape of a fast multi-lane panoramic highway. The front line, which had seen many young and not so young people die, has become today a tourist attraction, a path where people come for hiking. It is not a place of past war memorabilia, people come to admire the wonderfully beautiful nature.

I am not talking about distant history: Not long ago I was invited in Vienna to attend ceremonies marking the tenth anniversary of the final settlement of the dispute between Austria and Italy.

This was my first message - about reconciliation, tolerance and enjoyment of diversity.

My second message is about overcoming the Soviet legacy.

The big social engineering experiment of the 20th century is over. Centrally planned economy, centrally controlled ideology galvanizing the masses - these have been relegated to the past. The European experience is unequivocal - democracy is a prerequisite for progress, in particular for economic prosperity.

Democracy may neither be the most efficient system, nor the one producing the quickest and the easiest answers - but it is the only one that works in the long run.

For Armenia, as well as for the whole of the Caucasus, accepting democratic reform means a definitive break with the Soviet legacy.

This means that the old way of governance, based on authoritarianism and clan or client loyalties must give way to transparent decision making, under the rule of law, with a proper separation of powers and respect for individual human rights. Corruption, traditionally tolerated as a necessary nuisance must give way to clean administration. The habit of defiant individualism and contempt for State authority must be transformed into a modern concept of citizenship.

Difficult as the economic situation may be, the State must find way to restore a measure of social protection for the vulnerable groups of the population. Building for the future is only possible on the minimum basis of social cohesion.

I wish to specially underline one issue, which has become very important for the Council of Europe: the abolition of death penalty. Death penalty is also a legacy of the past. The Europeans have concluded that death penalty will not solve any issue. It will not even contribute to reducing of criminality - that is a fact proven over and over.
The Council of Europe member States have recently adopted a Protocol to the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights, abolishing the death penalty under any circumstances, even in times of war. I encourage the Armenian authorities to ratify Protocol to the Convention without delay.

My third message today is about cultural and regional co-operation.

Last year, the 10th anniversary of Armenian independence coincided with 1700 years since Christianity became state religion in Armenia.

This double anniversary was a welcome symbol of the link between the contribution Armenia made over the centuries to European culture and civilisation and the latest choice the Armenian people made in favour of European values of democracy, rule of law and respect for human rights.

During my visit I will have the chance to get acquainted with some of the places and monuments filled with the ancient Armenian history and culture - EchmEdzin - home of the Supreme Catholicos of the Armenian Apostolic Orthodox faith. Garni temple - Armenia’s foremost centre of Hellenistic culture and the ancient summer residence of Armenian kings, Geghardt monastery as well as lake Sevan which has seen many caravans passing by on the routes of the Great silk road.

Armenians are an old nation with a rich cultural and spiritual past and with their own national identity. The historical past and strong national feeling should not prevent you from looking towards the future, but should be an additional incentive for you to build with other European countries a continent based on shared democratic and cultural values.

The Council of Europe is a staunch supporter of regional co-operation. Regional and transborder co-operation have given a remarkable contribution to the reunification and the prosperity of Europe, we believe they can do much more so in the Caucasus region.

I am aware of the problems Armenia faces in promoting regional cooperation. Last month I wrote personal letters to the Minister of the Interior of Turkey and the Minister of Justice of Azerbaijan, encouraging them to accept an Armenian initiative on transborder co-operation.

I would like also to urge Armenia to take steps to facilitate the participation of your neighbours. If you keep telling your neighbours, in so many different ways, that you just want to “do business as usual” as if the open wound of Nagorno-Karabakh did not exist, they may naturally be reluctant to respond. It could be much better to start by recognizing the problem and only then agreeing to explore other issues, where cooperation might be possible today. The step-by-step approach begins with recognizing the legitimacy of your partner’s concerns, even when they are not yours.

If you believe in it, it will be possible to do it. Perhaps one day the town of Susha will become the symbol of reconciliation.
Վերջագային տարբերակ տվյալներից ընտրության կողմերից դեպի ձեռնարկի տվյալների դեպքում շատ արդյունավետացում կատարվի. Այսպիսով մի շարք այլ տարբերակներ են: Այս տարբերակներից ընտրելուն են շատ արդյունավետ մեջ վերջագայություն կատարելու համար. Այսպիսով մի շարք այլ տարբերակներ են: Այս տարբերակներից ընտրելուն են շատ արդյունավետ մեջ վերջագայություն կատարելու համար.