
Armenia Cannot Be Considered A Poor Country Any Longer.

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Yesterday "Azg", basing upon numerous articles published in the Turkish press, wrote that Turkey has estimated positively the parliamentary elections in Armenia and their results. In Turkey the public opinion is formed by the mass media and the official position of the Government is expressed by the Eurasian Strategic Research Center, Ankara.

These circumstances come to emphasize the importance of the Center's comments on the Armenian elections, especially when made by Lutem. This is one of his statements available at the Armenian Studies Institute's website.

"According to the information received, the ruling Republican party ("Hanrapetakan"- Azg) has won the majority. Although the number of votes gained has increased, they did not suffice to provide absolute majority in the Parliament for the Republican Party, as it had been expected. This means that the Government will be formed by the coalition led by the Republican Party and including "Dashnaktsutiun" and probably other lesser parties, as it has been for the last 7 years.

After the collapse of the USSR Armenia faced serious problems. Armenian economy was ruined, the government was unable to import energy carriers and sometimes there was lack of food. In spite of Armenia's success in its war with Azerbaijan for Karabakh, its economic resources were wasted.

After the armistice signed with Azerbaijan in 1994, life conditions in Armenia started to improve. But the political crisis did not come to end. Then the group led by Prime Minister Robert Kocharian forced President Levon Ter-Petrosian to resign his office.

Kocharian took his place, but the tension in the political arena of Armenia went on growing, until on November 27, 1999 the Prime Minister of Armenia and a number of deputies were murdered in the Hall of the Armenian National Assembly. After the strongest opposition representatives were dead, Robert Kocharian and his faithful fellows led by Defense Minister Serge Sarkisian continued implementation of their policy, of which the main terms are the following."

First, establishment of free market economy. Due to this policy Armenia managed to set the country's economy on balance in a short time, nevertheless social inequity grew. Thus a great number of millionaires appeared in a country where most of the population were poor.

Unlike Ter-Petrosian, Kocharian did a lot to develop the relationships with the Armenian Diaspora. After this investments from the Diaspora flowed into the economy of Armenia, which helped to improve the situation. Armenia GDP started growing by about 10% yearly, and made up \$1500 per head average instead of \$900-1000. Armenia cannot be considered a poor country any longer.

Without resigning pro-Russian orientation, Armenia developed relations with the USA and the EU. In result Armenia insured influx of certain finance assets, and achieved that most European states took neutral of pro-Armenian position on the Nagorno-Karabakh issue.

On the other hand, Kocharian and his counterparts assumed irreconcilable position against Turkey and Azerbaijan, and that policy, in despite of all negotiations, created background for stalemate in the Karabakh question and made impossible any yield on Armenia's side. Endless controversies started between Armenia and Turkey on the issue of the Genocide.

It is obvious that Armenian public supports such toughness, which insures support for Kocharian and his team. At the same time such policy causes Turkey to keep the border with Armenia shut.

It was supposed that such policy would change next year latest, as Kocharian, having held the office of President for two terms, having no opportunity of being re-elected, is to yield his chair to someone else. But unexpectedly, the appointment of Serge Sarkisian on the office of the Prime Minister of Armenia and the victory of Sarkisian's "Republican " party in the parliamentary elections this year, the latter became the most favored candidate on the coming presidential elections. If so, one can surely say that Serge Sarkisian, who has been supporting Robert Kocharian through 10 years of political career, will continue Kocharian's policy when becoming President of Armenia."
