

La Globalisation : Menace ou Chance ?

The Fifth Conference of Writers of armenian Origin Composing in Other Languages, organized by the joint efforts of the Republic of Armenia Ministry of Diaspora, Writers Union of Armenia, World Armenian Congress and Armenian General Benevolent Union took place in Tsaghkadzor from 12-15 July 2013. The theme of the Conference was "Globalization and National Identity".



There were seventy participants, thirty-nine of them from sixteen different countries and thirty-one from Armenia.

The conference was presided by Mr. Levon Ananyan, Chairman of the Writers' Union of Armenia, . The details are given in Lucine Kasbarian's article referred here:

<http://hetq.am/eng/opinion/28394/did-the-armenian-writers-conference-walk-the-talk?.html>

You may wish to obtain permission from her or Hedq, whatever the protocol is, if you wish to copy extracts.

Since my computer is unstable I have not downloaded my pictures which do not capture the essence of the conference anyway. The picture in Hedq's article is better.

The Case for Globalization by Mary Terzian

A Dictionary of Economics defines globalization as “the increasing worldwide integration of economic, cultural, political, religious, and social systems.” It is a mix of strategies for redesigning the global economy so that it better serves the public good. Globalization refers to a lack of trade barriers between participating nations and the creation of an open arena for interchanges of views, products, ideas, and economic expansion. It is not a new process but a new word for an old trade that has existed since the Phoenicians started exploring the world. Globalization is an inevitable melding that has accelerated over time, particularly in the recent past, because of technological advances in telecommunications and travel that have shortened distances considerably. Some may consider it a threat to national identity, for fear of being swallowed by greater nations. Others consider it a complex set of contradictory forces that offers better trading opportunities, more competitive products, and smoother cooperation between countries. Globalization does not exclude complications. These may inevitably arise during its complex process.

We, Armenians, as a nation, are so entrenched in our age-old traditions that any slight change in our lifestyle is interpreted as disloyalty to our ancestors, without considering that ancient concepts become obsolete as humanity progresses. Globalization is in vogue now. Is it the fear of losing identity that stops us from jumping on the bandwagon? Is it the spectre of failure that gives us the shivers? Is it the fear of inadequacy that will forever hurt our pride? Or is it the uncertainty of leaving our comfort zone to face an undefined situation? Should we allow old traditions hamper our progress or should we look forward to innovation that is advancing at an accelerating pace? Do we want to choose isolation in order to defend our “comfort zone” ignoring reality? What would avoidance lead us to?

To me globalization means enrichment and expansion in the right direction. Having lived in different countries and in the United Nations' ambiance I have learned to be tolerant of cultures that do not agree with my beliefs and personality. I have not stopped respecting non-Armenians because their philosophy is different, just as I have expected my values to be respected, without having to adopt concepts alien to me. We are all human beings, born into

different circumstances, and we each have our dignity. We learn to compromise, with diplomacy, instead of isolation, in order to obtain better interaction.

Globalization is not an imposition on any nation but a new wave working its way around the world. It is a step towards cooperation and improvement of our modus operandi by harvesting the best of other cultures and by sharing our achievements with them. We can be selective in our approach to accept the benefits it brings and exclude the influences deemed harmful. We need to have the self confidence to join the movement in so far that it does not mar our identity. We are already globalized through the internet, skype, and digital communications. We are instantly aware of news around the world, can download a book in an instant, we carry telephones in our pockets, gps' in our cars and can find our lost pets if we insert a chip in their body. Exciting innovations are coming down the line daily, changing the world of our childhood. We could learn a lot by keeping an open attitude.

Globalization will certainly introduce changes in our perspective. Some change is voluntary as in marriages, others are involuntary but necessary, because life will not stop from rolling forward. It may be uncomfortable at first to adjust to new conditions, very much like living in a different country, but it can also offer us wider scope for success. To assume that we do not need improvement is a gross misconception. There is always room for growth. We have survived major catastrophes, put up with foreign rulers, suffered occupation, lived through genocide and the "Sovietization" of our land, have withstood expatriation, earthquakes and have survived it all. Why should we fight or defer globalization when we have weathered giant catastrophes?

Globalization brings innovation, re-incarnation, extension of our cultural boundaries and mellows our prejudices when we actually meet our business partners head on. Whether it will be a blow to our national pride and "assumed" superiority as a nation, a threat to our national existence, a path that may undermine our belief system, or a blessing, we need to face the wave and tame it. We always look back to our glorious (!) past during which our woes have unfortunately exceeded our joys. Let us face it. We have not made remarkable progress. The fact that four times as many Armenians live outside Armenia indicates that homeland is not the Eden it was meant to be. With proper management of resources and, with the erection of reasonable barriers against the onslaught of foreign attitudes that undermine our core values, we can prosper in globalization without sacrificing our autonomy or individuality.

It is probable that globalization will eventually impose one universal

language or a select few to facilitate interaction between nations. Some time ago there was a roar about teaching English in our homeland classrooms. Why not? Those of us living in the Diaspora had to learn foreign languages, not one but many, for survival or for self-edification. We did not lose one iota of our identity by doing so. On the contrary, we incorporated foreign languages in our life to understand the world better. As a nation we have the singular status of being scattered around the world, a disadvantage that may be used as an opportunity if we establish an "Armenian Global Information Network," in each country where Armenians live. The experience and knowledge of astute community leaders well versed in local culture could be used to best advantage for providing insider information on legal processes, cultural taboos, business practices, trade possibilities and an encyclopedia's worth of unwritten protocol for smooth negotiations.

In terms of language, if we are afraid to lose our own, let us look back at recent history. It is regrettable that we do not have a uniform language. We use various dialects spoken across the nation to the point of becoming incomprehensible to each other. Our language has changed into "ashkharhapar," has been "Sovietized", and tinted with foreign words like Russian, Arabic, Latin, English, and French words that have seeped into our linguistic communications. We still exist and the Diaspora continues to survive, despite the doom of demise. Isn't it about time we use one universal Armenian language? Perhaps if we work on understanding ourselves we might better interpret the world.

If the fear of globalization is due to our incompetence, to measure up to larger nations, we have solid proof that despite our small number our successes on the world stage have been impressive. We have won global competitions. We have had world champions in chess games, considered to be the highest level of intellect. We have snatched prizes at film festivals, won medals in the Olympics, have participated in musical competitions, even with our Duduk and Kanon and have earned recognition in science in several fields, in Armenia or in the Diaspora. Names like Saroyan, Khachadourian, Aznavour and many other personalities have become household names. The fact that these exploits were realized less than two generations after the brutal massacres that left a nation in shambles is by no means insignificant. Yes we are a small nation compared to China, India and the United States of America, but our creative ability is unfathomable, our will made of iron and our determination stubborn as confirmed by the adage: Karen Hatz gue hanenk (we extract bread out of stone).

Being open to change does not mean selling one's soul to the devil. It means adding to the qualifications we possess already, and to the refinement of

others that we direly need: discipline, organization, transparent transactions free of bribes, fraud, waste and abuse. Can we live up to gender equality, respect for human rights, timely completion of contractual obligations and a modus operandi that is devoid of greed, self-edification, and usurpation of rights?

As for the corruption of our national identity, we are free to tailor innovation to our standards and mores. In life's dynamic flow even if the environment does not change we do. With maturity comes wisdom, experience and clearer judgement through a magnified lens. by keeping the communication lines and our minds open, we can compete in an international world if we get organized. No nation in the world is self-sufficient. Some countries have organizational skills, others have raw resources, a third has investors, oil extraction equipment, another possesses manufacturing facilities. We have become more interdependent than ever. Institutions like Doctors Without Borders, The International Red Cross, the International Monetary Fund and similar respectable organizations, even individuals like Oprah who has established a school in South Africa for girls, bear witness to the fact that major lifestyle improvements can be achieved with cooperation. Globalization may be the answer.

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