

The Assyrian Political Bazaar

With all that has passed in the history of the Assyrian nation, and even though some ninety years have passed on the beginning of its national movement, yet a large part of the Assyrian people are still misunderstanding the importance of self determination yielding before the de facto situation, and misunderstanding their identity wandering in the desert of names. Thus the “naivety” of many became the prominent excuse for defeatism of organizations and associations which are active in all fields, so according to our mutual “naïve” understanding, any national movement must be an “intellectual reform” movement before any thing else through its organizations which have the responsibility of guiding the society, while we see that our organizations are themselves guided by this naïve society, but when they succeed in guiding the society, that comes only for imaginary goals that don't exist in the first place, enjoying the society's naivety.

The bloody challenges of the 20th century (before the unionism) were the main reason for the birth of the Assyrian national movement, while the challenges of the 21st century (the unionism era) proved that a large part of the Assyrian people are but a group of customers in the Assyrian political bazaar shopping for the compound names in “unity” garments and defeat banners in “realism” garments, exactly like the vendors in this bazaar proved that they are but customers in the non-Assyrian political bazaar, shopping for positions in “democracy” garments while the fact is that they are mere tools and followers before every decision, law, event or dues. Hence, the Assyrian identity will lose its national qualities and rights turning the Assyrian people to mere masses of bones and flesh walking in the kurdified and Islamized streets of Assyria.

The latest elections were a test for the capability of the Assyrian people; organizations and individuals in facing reality, but they failed as we were all shocked to learn about the elections results, however, every one of us was shocked in his own way and for different reasons. The elections had propaganda campaigns which some of our politicians weren't able to practice properly within the Assyrian home, thus grave accusations supported with documents that no one saw (regardless whether they were true or not) and lies were spread about the “sectarianism” of another slate, all this increased the gap within the society between a supporter for this or that, thus these accusations made many voters lose their confidence in all parties causing them to shun away from participating in the elections.

As to the failure in dealing with the Iraqi home in general ... The signs were obvious in the triangle of Assyrian slates, when the voter didn't care for their programs but rather for some of the personalities and the halo surrounding them under the banner of strife (which is unknown to both the candidates and voters), the sanctity of the martyrs blood (whose sacrifice was disregarded) as well as the wisdom, patience and realism (which are only a casing for defeatism).

Therefore, the failure in elections wasn't due to the lack of the number of elected candidates from the Assyrian slates but rather it was because of their poor quality, so what if one hundred candidates had succeeded when they didn't care about the identity and rights of their people? And what if only one qualified person was elected?

We notice that the Assyrians failure in elections was a qualitative rather than a quantitative one, but we're not going to promote one slate over another, because the promotional time is over and it's time to learn a lesson out of the results and how the national facts were sacrificed for political parties advantages, personal benefits or even "non-Assyrian" advantages. The diversity of Assyrian slates which was a reason in the quantitative and qualitative failure at once, was due to the different visions which were present in the elections programs of each slate, hence a political rather than an emotional reading of these programs shows:

a) Slate 139, concentrated on patriotism, identity and rights - none of its candidates succeeded.

b) Slate 148, concentrated on patriotism and some rights, neglected the identity - none of its candidates succeeded.

c) Slate 204, concentrated on patriotism, and neglected both the identity and rights - one candidate was elected.

We can safely say that the Assyrian voters didn't understand the political ramifications behind their voting, not only because the majority of voters didn't read the electoral programs but because those who read them were guided by sectarianism, emotions, worshipping symbols and being followers. This failure was the smallest link in the chain of the Assyrian people's disappointments through several important political dues which many didn't understand or refused to understand such as the Iraqi Opposition's London Conference, then the Interim Kurd- Islamic constitution. The elections test put the Assyrian progression before two basic problems:

1- Some politicians being unqualified and that was evident in their disdain attitude towards the established facts of national identity and self determination rights.

2- The misunderstanding of a large section of the Assyrian population in regards to the most important factors for the continuation of the national movement of a marginalized, persecuted people; those two important factors are identity preservation and demanding rights, while we notice that the Assyrian political struggle is about the aforementioned factors, for identity preservation is hindered by the name issue, while demanding rights is hindered by defeatism, humiliation and submission.

We are bored from the continuous explanation of the difference between the "name" and "naming", but we can deduce that the lie of "unity" took much of the Assyrian people's time turning it into a case in itself, thus it's not a hidden fact that the name problem (compound names) played an active role in dividing the Assyrian society as the continuous result to the rising of national notions, one "Chaldean" and another "Syrian" but these two novelties are the result of the divisive sectarian fanaticism of some clergy and others benefiting from it, taking advantage of the simplicity of some Assyrians who support them just because they belong to their denominations. The period following Saddam's demise witnessed a perplexed war between the "Assyrian" nationalism and the new imported notions when an ideological conflict appeared next to a political one as a "nationalistic" movement named Chaldean was created, supported and instigated by the kurdish currents, the clergy and the Vatican, while the other

appeared with the name Syrian also supported and instigated by the clergy and few currents whose identity or case remains unknown... All this happened within the Assyrian home to the extent that those restraining the Assyrian identity were called “unifiers” while those who revered it were called “fanatics”... This went on while antagonistic currents worked also on obliterating our national identity forcing us to flee Assyria either by Kurdifying it at the hands of some “secularists” or Islamizing it by some “patriots”.

Going back to the period following Saddam, we notice that after the Assyrian Democratic Movement had concocted the Chaldo-Assyrian term and decided to endorse it as the new “political” name, despite criticism on the part of those Assyrians protective of the national terms including some supporters of the ADM itself, the latter and its auxiliaries held the “unity” conference in Baghdad which was hailed by some simple Assyrians without understanding its goals, reasons and basics. In order to clarify, it’s enough to quote the sayings of one of the most frightful “Chaldean leaders” over the largest Assyrian political organization, which is “Mr.” Shlimoun Wardouni (as a politician and not a bishop), who said in his speech:

“The aim of the heads of Churches and Christian denominations is to establish an independent council where all the Christians can unify their word before the government and people to work and re-build, so that every ethnicity and denomination would be an important member and without them this council will fall short of its goals and its functions would be difficult.”(1) Therefore, he frankly said it so that “every ethnicity and denomination would be an important member in the council”, that is the comic name would join “denominations and ethnicities” thus both names Assyrian and Chaldean would interchangeably be denominational and ethnic, hence the unity of the Baghdad conference was uniting the Assyrian nationality with the so-called “Chaldean nationality” under a unified “Christian” banner.

Wardouni continues his historical speech as the following:

“This council is self administered but shall consult with the ecclesiastical authority which will choose an inclusive name to represent it in the new Iraqi constitution where religions will not be mentioned but ethnicities; this was the main goal for this conference in order to explain thoughts and exchange opinions.”(2) Thus the agreed upon name “Chaldo-Assyrian” came to be mentioned in the ominous Interim Constitution following five months of “exchanging opinions” to represent two nationalities (neither one was officially recognized...) He continues his preaching to simple Assyrians that the so-called “Chaldean nationality” won’t melt within the comic name when he said: “The present council members adopted the name of the independent Chaldo-Ashur council only to unite the representation and not to melt any nationalities or ethnicities but rather to include every one, so if all these nationalities are mentioned in the constitution then that’s a good thing but if not then a general name can be used which would be approved by all.”(3) The Assyrian (Roman) Catholic Church which dominates its society (educated and illiterates) adopts today this destructive notion in collaboration with the unionists, the Vatican and the Kurdish tribal leadership, this brought us to this point to be officially recognized as “Christians” without any national adjective.

During the birth period of the mockery name we noticed how the interests met between the following factions:

a) The Vatican's interest which is upset at the spread of Evangelical preaching amongst the Kurdish tribes of Suleimaniyah, when the Vatican is desperately trying to preserve the Chaldean name supporting the Assyrian (Roman) Catholic clergy because the Chaldean name represents the Roman Catholic presence in Iraq and it would be worthless if Assyrian is recognized as the sole uniting national name in the constitution.

b) The interests of the Kurdish tribes in dividing the Assyrian people by creating "Chaldean" parties, and this is exactly what happened.

c) The interests of the unionist Assyrians who wanted to obtain as many votes as possible in order to secure seats.

The Chaldean Church will stand against the Chaldean politicians because it won't accept that politicians assume its role, that's obvious when the Chaldean Church calls for united "Chaldo-Assyrian" stands when its politicians try to move separately, and we realize the Church's own separatist position when the voice of its politicians fades a little. Today there are disputes, some public and others covert between the politicians and the Church when each is trying to dominate and lead the Chaldean "nationalism". To top it all, the compound names turned into a cover up for conspiracies, when they were presented into the Assyrian political bazaar as tools to turn us away from fateful matters which the Assyrian political parties failed to deal with individually and collectively, or even to officially present them to non-Assyrians. This makes us doubt even more whether those compound names were used to allow the passing of more dangerous projects. Thus, the name problem was created drawing the attention to the phrase "Assyrians AND Chaldeans" making it the main focus from the London Opposition Conference to the time when the ominous Interim Constitution was written as well as in the constitution of the so-called "Kurdistan". The "and" even if ridiculous took over the marginalization of the Assyrian people's rights in the formal Iraqi bulletins, and we didn't see any of the "and" opposers protesting this marginalization, but rather they succeeded in drawing the attention of a large portion of the Assyrian people away from the negligence of fateful matters. Then the "administrative area" in the so-called "Nineveh Plain" was just proposed to be a part of the Kurdish plot to join the eastern part of Mosul to the so-called "Kurdistan" and lately some Yizidi and Assyrian clergy who are Barzani followers, called for the joining of the so-called "Nineveh Plain" to the so-called "Kurdistan", again there was no comment on the part of those calling for the administrative area.

Therefore, no one recognizes our nationality till this moment ("whatever you like to call it" - as the vendors tell their customers) and the Iraqi society with its politicians who don't belong to the so-called "our people" don't consider us as a nationality but rather as a group of "Christian" sects, because the compound name gives a Christian impression rather than a national one. Mr. Ibrahim al-Ja'afari was one of those who expressed that when he said in his speech at the opening of the Younadam Kanna conference: "You as Assyrians AND Chaldeans AND Syrians shall be able to reach to the level of the active Iraqi powers when you unite..." These malice phrases continue to be mentioned in the declarations of all Iraqi politicians including Mr. Younadam Kanna the sole owner of the "Chaldo-Assyrian" brand and the main opponent of the "and" when he said in one of his interviews: "There are many families and thousands of

Faileyeen, Shiite, kurds, Assyrians and others and Chaldeans as well as non-Iraqis who were forced to flee.”(4) For sure he must have mentioned it inadvertently...

The compound comic name was the biggest mistake even though it appealed to some emotional and selective Assyrians with the encouragement of some organizations whose founders had graduated from schools that are antagonistic to the Assyrian identity not only in Iraq but also in other countries where Assyrians live, hence the identity traders with their different ideas appeared, the Syrian nationalist, the Kurdistani, the communist, the “Christian Iraqi” and the former Arabist... All those are calling today for the unity of a people whom they never cared for, while the people stand perplexed about how to unite. At the same time the compound name turned unity into a dilemma for the rightful Assyrians because they have to choose between being loyal to their identity or to the unity of “our people” under a comic name. The Assyrian identity has turned into an electoral commodity when the word “people” replaced “nationality” in the political speeches making the identity (“whatever you call it”!!) lose its national particularity, this is exactly what happened when the compound names were thrown into the bazaar bearing different styles mostly however in the fashionable purple color... It started with “Chaldo-Assyrian” as the time to write the interim constitution and appointing the participating committees had approached, and was followed by “ChaldoAssyrian Syrian” as the time had approached for the interim national council elections and the governorates councils, to be completed as “Christians” in the formal announcement of representation in the interim national council and government. Therefore, all that we hear today is but a big lie and the compound names are but an assassination of the Assyrian identity under the banner of “unity”, and for the “kurdish Christian” seats manned by Assyrians. There isn’t a unity as long as there are those who are holding on to their Assyrian identity facing those who are disregarding it. This is normal because the matter isn’t that of a name as some are trying to promote it but rather that of an identity, and since history is a truth that can’t be changed then theoretically the attempts to change an identity usually create different struggling currents increasing in the process the divisions rather than unity. Practically however the methods which were followed to realize the goals (the declared ones) were a failure because all the national notions were sacrificed in order to succeed in the elections of 30/01/2005. Hence let’s ask the promoters of the compound names and especially the ADM being a sponsor of unionism:

1. Where have you reached in what you call “unity”?
2. Why the Chaldeans withdrew from your slate even though you had adopted the comic name as a “uniting” tactic as you had previously pretended?
3. How do you explain the failure of the Chaldean Tsunami (5) for whom you changed your name and principles, in organizing a slate or even having a representative in the interim national council (6)?
4. Why did you accept the name “Christian” for the seats in the national council and government, and you didn’t protest demanding the name “Chaldo-Assyrian” which you consider to be appropriate?
5. How worthy was the appeal of the clergy who were the frightful monsters in your conference

of 23/10/2003 and who responded to them to support this or that?

6. How do you explain your slate acquiring 36.000 votes out of 500.000 Assyrians eligible to vote following all these steps which you had considered as “unifying accomplishments” (compound names) and “dealing with reality”(defeatism and submission in your external affairs policy)?

If the marginalization of the Assyrians in what you call the “Nineveh Plain” is your excuse for failing, then isn't that the result of your previous cover up of the Kurdish terrorist practices? Or were those “merely individual trespasses which were being handled” like previous ones? Why didn't you expose the perpetrators as your competitors did and they also are in Iraq just like you but without body guards? With all that surrounded this false unity, the Assyrian intellect didn't take a steadfast position vis a vis this policy, rather we noticed the romanticism in the writings of some compromisers, so since January 30th, 2005 we have read many articles by well known writers weeping about the elections results calling for “unity”. However, those writers always deal with the absolute and in general terms when they write about a political plan and they anticipate the results in a poetic manner even before the idea is born, but they don't take into consideration the lessons from previous conferences, neither do they look into the problem in depth or calculate the hurdles which will face every call for a “unity” conference. That's why we always see a sea of articles which are a waste of time because the words of every article are repeated in the previous one. And today these articles and invitations are the proof to the failure of yesterday's conferences which the same authors and intellects wrote about and praised, beginning from the G8 conference in London (failing to trust the worthy) to Amsterdam (failing to seriously follow up on decisions) to the establishment of the so-called “Chaldo-Assyrian national council” in May/2003 (the empty box which turned into “Chaldo-Assyrian-Syrian”, when the leaders of the two Syrian Churches were upset) ending up with the Younadam Kanna conference in Baghdad (failure to respect the identity and fate). This latter came only to complete the circle of political divisions and disputes inside the Assyrian home and a nail in the coffin of the Assyrian identity and destiny, hence today's reality is the witness to all that.

The intellectuals have a prominent role in solving the name problem, especially if they belong to the denominational societies which didn't understand the Assyrian identity because of their misleading clergy, there's a large number of those intellectuals who support the Assyrian name and who have to courageously confront any meddler who tries to be a hurdle before the “Assyrian” unity whether it's a clergyman or a politician, in addition all the cautious analysis, commentaries and fear of criticism aren't useful any more because the Assyrian nation is passing today in one of the most critical periods in its history. As for the naïve people, they have not only followed unity at the expense of identity, it also seems that a large group of them are being used as a tool for others to secure positions or for goals that they know nothing about nor are they aware of the defeatism and prostration policy even though the identity of its heroes is apparent. Suddenly, the so-called “Bet Nahrain” Freedom Party (GHB), and the both democratic [Assyrian Movement]-(ADM) and [“Athuri” Organization]-(ADO) – sorry if we forgot any others - they woke up and organized demonstrations calling some simple folk who don't know that the citizenship right doesn't only mean the right to vote, in any case, that public movement meant that Assyrians are capable to express themselves and demonstrate for what they think to be fateful matters, so, may the hands, feet, banners and shouts of those demonstrators be blessed

... but:

1. Why are our demonstrations only for seats and positions?
2. Where were the organizers when the Assyrian lands were kurdified, Islamized and Arabized over decades?
3. Where were the organizers when the Turkification and Kurdification in Turkey in the 1980's were exchanging the Assyrian ball which ended up at the door steps of the European embassies?
4. Where were the organizers, when the western countries ambassadors in Ankara and Islamabad got tired of the visa applications of Assyrian refugees from Iran, who finally fate threw them in the streets of European countries without food or shelter?
5. Where were the organizers just a year ago, when the ominous interim constitution was drafted, the one that kurdified and Islamized the same people for whom the demonstrations were held against their marginalization? Didn't the very organizers hail at the time saying: "Today is the feast of the Chaldo-Assyrian nation"?
6. Didn't we dance for the TAL in the streets of Baghdad invited by the very organizers of today's demonstration, while the Turkmen demonstrated in protest against the same constitution gazing at us in pity and regret?
7. Why don't we simply ask our minor emperors: "What Cause is your strife for"? Before we demonstrate for their seats...
8. Why don't we learn a lesson from the defeatism stands of our politicians inside and outside Assyria so that we can be at par in the decisions concerning the national and patriotic dues?
9. Why do we allow some of our politicians to deceive us with the littlest things turning ourselves to slaves of their prostration policy and the "reality" lies which have become the main excuses for their defeatism rather than preserving our Assyrian identity and asking for our legitimate rights?

To those who had demonstrated we say that the Assyrian Cause is more important than any movement, organization or individual, it's not a circumstantial Cause at all but it was born out of suffering long before any of the wretched who had organized the demonstrations were born, it's a Cause of "fateful" rights more than that of teaching the language, having a ministerial position, having charitable projects or teaching tailoring. Assyrian rights should be "beside" those of other Iraqi groups, but not "under" nor "within" them. Who can deny that the Assyrian Cause was at its greatest momentum individually, collectively and propaganda wise before there were any political organizations? And who would have believed at that time that we will face what we are facing today after the birth of political parties?

Let's admit that the Assyrian national movement has proved its failure because the change in circumstances may be the reason to change the means of political methods but not

at the expense of national affirmations (identity) or political affirmations (the right of self determination). Let's also admit that the Assyrian national movement gave up when serious periods of confrontation began, especially on the part of the old organizations which consider themselves as the pioneers in "struggle" and "raising awareness". Let's also remember that even those parties who are loyal to the Assyrian identity aren't really "politically united" in the meaning of the word. Let's admit that the Assyrian national movement is in need of an internal cleansing and renewal operation which will strip it of all the trivial banners such as unionism, realism, wisdom, and notions... slogans that were continuously used as conspiracies against the Assyrian nation. Let's admit that at present we lack a "leadership" which if it wasn't to defend our rights and identity then at least to "present" them out of the Assyrian arena, the time has come to be aware of what's awaiting us and to determine our goals despite any hurdles (internal or external). There are some currents who insist on presenting the Assyrian fateful matters regardless of the difficulties and threats. The birth of these currents is our only chance to raise our voice, because we have had enough with the dishonorable stands till now. These new currents are in need of the Assyrian people's support, religious and secular associations and with the support of the heroes who had demonstrated for the unknown.

These currents are rejected by the simple folk because they are "new" but the hope is for them to continue their work through their faith which was demonstrated in their electoral program, as well as their transparency and honesty in explaining the Assyrian and other names, also to continue with their courage which is evident in their calls through the different media outlets about the Kurdification practices (which others didn't dare to do), we also appeal to them to continue on standing as one and trying as much as possible to explain their strategic and national notions to the public who has grasped them yet. Our organizations that are loyal to the Assyrian national affirmations must endeavor to hold an urgent Assyrian national conference in Iraq in order to consider the fateful concerns which will be the new start for the Assyrian Cause which has been numb at the hands of the old worn out political institutions, the rightful Assyrian demands should be presented in the new Iraq and they should be patriotic, stemming from the principle of "equality" which all the Iraqi politicians (liars and honest) sing its praises. And even if the enemies of the Assyrian nation don't agree on realizing the Assyrian demands, that will not annul their legitimacy, and this is the sole portal to a true unity, an "Assyrian" unity out of the trust of the Assyrian people in its parties... Then we say towards a Cause ...

Footnotes:

1. An AFP (Agence France Presse) 24/10/2003.
2. Same source as above.
3. Same source as above.
4. "Noqtat Nizam" (an Arabic program on Al – Arabiyya channel) November19/2004.
5. Reference here is to the "nationalistic" Chaldean notion which has appeared lately for some of the Chaldean Church followers (not the Chaldean denomination in general) and which was exaggerated by the "unifiers".

6. One candidate of the so-called Chaldean nationality had succeeded in the elections, but with the help of kurdish votes and through the slate of the so-called "kurdistan".