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ARMENIA'S PROPAGANDA PROJECT IN EUROVISION 2015

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Analyst (2015-2017)

The finals of the Eurovision Song Contest 2015 took place in Vienna, Austria on May 23, 2015. The contest was won by Mads Zelmerlow who represented Sweden with the song Heroes. Contrary to expectations, Armenias song Face the Shadow performed by the group Genealogy was placed 16th among 27 participants in the finals[1] – a result that certainly proved to be a disillusionment.

The group Genealogy who performed the song Face the Shadow consisted of six members – five members from the Armenian diaspora in five continents and one member from Armenia. It was reported that the group was inspired by the forget-me-not flower.[2] The group was supposedly promoting peace, love and unity and the idea of Building Bridges, which is the slogan of the 2015 Eurovision Song Contest.[3]

However, the song, the music video, the performance, etc. was quite the opposite of the positive ideas which the group was supposedly promoting. Certainly, on the 100th anniversary of the First World War time losses which is fashionably labeled as Armenian Genocide, it is very clear that Armenia tried to use Eurovision as a means for propaganda and thus be successful in the contest.

First and foremost, Face the Shadow was a song full of political subtexts. Despite the rules of the contest clearly states that lyrics of a song performed in the contest should not contain any political messages, the song contained political messages. Its original title Dont Deny and its lyrics[4] contained references to wartime losses of the Armenians and conveyed the political message calling for the worldwide recognition of genocide. The words Dont Deny continually repeated in the lyrics was clearly intended for Turkey (and Azerbaijan). Although Armenia denied the fact that it contained political subtexts, the title was later changed to Face the Shadow to supposedly remove any suggestion of political intent. However the lyrics remained the same. It is obvious that the word shadow in the new title and in the lyrics imply the evil done by the Turks against Armenians.

Furthermore, the music video of the song also had a dark and political theme. Most notably, the scene in which members of a family posing for a family photo in World War I-era outfits - an obvious representation of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire during the First World War - are one by one disappearing is clearly an allusion to their political message.

The performance of Genealogy in the finals was also quite interesting. Contrary to the peaceful and positive nature of the song, the performance was pretty dark that one could feel that he was really facing the shadow no pun intended. Some critics even compared the group to vampires[5] and medieval druids.[6] It seems that they went overboard in order to give a political message.

In the end, Armenias Genealogy could not live up to the hype and failed badly. Although it was predicted by some that Face the Shadow would be high on the score sheet,[7] Armenia only became 16th in the contest. Armenia was given full points (12 points) only by Georgia, which is somewhat understandable as it is a tradition in the Eurovision to give high points to neighbors. However, most notably, only 6 points (the second highest score for Armenia) was awarded by Russia, which is a close ally of Armenia and has the largest Armenian diaspora community outside of Armenia. Furthermore, France, also a close ally of Armenia and a country with a large Armenian community, only awarded 3 points.

Armenia obviously thought that politics and propaganda would elevate their song but it is clear that Armenias political propaganda song did not have the expected effect on the audience. The false messages conveyed in the song did not influence the audiences choice. Also Russian President Putins and French President Hollandes participation in the ceremonies held in Yerevan and all the demonstrations of solidarity did not reflect into the contest. It should be underlined that Eurovision is only a song contest and not a platform for politics and Armenian allegations.

As could be inferred from the song, Armenia accuses Turkey for denying the Armenian genocide. But how can Turkey deny something that is not a legally and historically proven fact, truth etc.? There is no international court decision that claims the events during the First World War amounted to genocide. Despite Turkeys efforts to reveal the truths such as the proposal to establish commission of historians, Armenia continues to ignore these efforts. They overlook all of evidence that refutes their arguments and claims. Armenia also inflates the number of Armenian casualties in order to dramatize the wartime losses. Furthermore, they also deny the sufferings of the Turks at the hands of the Armenians during the revolts and conflicts prior to the war and later in collaboration with the Tsarist Russian army in the east and the French army in the south during the First World War.

To sum up, Armenias Genealogy project in the Eurovision was a failure. Face the Shadow had nothing to do with Building Bridges or peace, love and unity. Their goal of introducing political claims to large masses was not achieved and just like the centennial ceremonies and other events, it did not have any effect other than maybe satisfying the Armenian public opinion. Ultimately, these increasing efforts of hatred-mongering and defamation of Turks and Turkey by Armenia does nothing more than further deteriorating Turkey-Armenia relations and blocking the way for reconciliation.

[1] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Armenia_in_the_Eurovision_Song_Contest_2015#cite_note-14

[2] The forget-me-not flower is the symbol of Armenian Genocide Centennial. The five members from diaspora is supposed to represent the five petals of the flower while the center of flower is supposed to be represented by the member from Armenia.

[3] http://www.eurovision.tv/page/history/year/participant-profile/?song=32973

[4] http://www.eurovision.tv/event/lyrics?event=2073&song=32973

[5] http://www.mirror.co.uk/tv/tv-news/eurovision-2015-armenias-genealogy-compared-5750190

[6] http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/tvandradio/eurovision/11620062/what-we-learnt-from-eurovision-2015.html

[7] The Guardian even predicted that Armenia would win the Eurovision 2015 http://www.theguardian.com/news/datablog/2015/may/22/eurovision-2015-guardian-data-driven-prediction?CMP=share_btn_fb

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