

Armenian crime amnesia?

By Bruce Fein

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Armenian crimes against humanity and war crimes against the Ottoman Turkish and Kurdish populations of eastern and southern Anatolia during World War I and its aftermath have been forgotten amidst congressional preoccupation with placating the vocal and richly financed Armenian lobby.

Last Wednesday, the Armenians hectored members of the House International Relations Committee by a 27-21 vote into passing a counterfactual resolution convicting the Ottoman Empire and its successor state, the Republic of Turkey, of genocide. A historically supportable resolution would have condemned massacres against Armenians with the same vigor, as it should have condemned massacres by Armenians against the innocent Muslim populations of the crumbling Ottoman Empire.

Capt. Emory Niles and Arthur Sutherland, on an official 1919 U.S. mission to eastern Anatolia, reported: "In the entire region from Bitlis through Van to Bayezit, we were informed that the damage and destruction had been done by the Armenians, who, after the Russians retired, remained in occupation of the country and who, when the Turkish army advanced, destroyed everything belonging to the Musulmans. Moreover, the Armenians are accused of having committed murder, rape, arson and horrible atrocities of every description upon the Musulman population. At first, we were most incredulous of these stories, but we finally came to believe them, since the testimony was absolutely unanimous and was corroborated by material evidence. For instance, the only quarters left at all intact in the cities of Bitlis and Van are Armenian quarters ... while the Musulman quarters were completely destroyed."

Niles and Sutherland were fortified by American and German missionaries on the spot in Van. American Clarence Ussher reported that Armenians put the Turkish men "to death," and, for days, "They burned and murdered." A German missionary recalled that, "The memory of these entirely helpless Turkish women, defeated and at the mercy of the [Armenians] belongs to the saddest recollections from that time."

A March 23, 1920, letter of Col. Charles Furlong, an Army intelligence officer and U.S. Delegate to the Paris Peace Conference, to President Woodrow Wilson elaborated: "We hear much, both truth and gross exaggeration of Turkish massacres of Armenians, but little or nothing of the Armenian massacres of Turks. ... The recent so-called Marash massacres [of Armenians] have not been substantiated. In fact, in the minds of many who are familiar with the situation, there is a grave question whether it was not the Turk who suffered at the hands of the Armenian and French armed contingents which were known to be occupying that city and vicinity. ... Our opportunity to gain the esteem and respect of the Muslim world ... will depend much on whether America hears Turkey's untrammelled voice and evidence which she has never succeeded in placing before the Court of Nations."

The United States neglected Col. Furlong's admonition in 1920, and again last Wednesday. Nothing seems to have changed from those days, when Christian lives were more precious than the lives of the "infidels."

Justin McCarthy of the University of Louisville concluded that a staggering 2.5 million Anatolian Muslims died in World War I and the Turkish War of Independence. More than 1 million died in the Six Provinces in Eastern Anatolia, as Armenians with the help of Russia's invading armies sought to reclaim their historical homeland.

In contrast, best contemporaneous estimates place the number of Armenians who died in the war and its aftermath at between 150,000 and 600,000. The Armenian death count climbed to 1.5 million over the years on the back of political clout and propaganda.

The committee voiced horror over the Armenian suffering, but said nothing about the suffering Armenians

inflicted on the Muslim population. Nor did the committee deplore the 60 years of Armenian terrorism in the Ottoman capital Istanbul, including assassination of the Armenian patriarch and an attempted assassination of the sultan as he was leaving prayer. Armenian terror was exported to the U.S. mainland and Europe by fanatics who murdered over 70 Turkish diplomats, three of them in Los Angeles and one honorary consul general in Boston.

Mourad Topalian, erstwhile head of the Armenian National Committee of America, a lead lobbying group behind the resolution and major campaign contributor to House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and other members, was sentenced to 36 months in prison for complicity in a conspiracy to bomb the Turkish mission at the United Nations. Yet Topalian has escaped a terrorist label by either Armenian-Americans or their echo chambers in Congress.

The home of the late Professor Stanford Shaw of the University of California-Los Angeles was firebombed in retaliation for his academic courage in disputing the Armenian genocide claim. Like Benito Mussolini, Armenians believe truth is an assertion at the head of a figurative bayonet.

In parts of Europe, disbelief in the Armenian genocide allegation is a crime on par with Holocaust denial. But the Holocaust was proven before the Nuremberg Tribunal with the trappings of due process. Armenians, in contrast, have forgone bringing their genocide allegation before the International Court of Justice because it is unsupported by historical facts.

In contrast to open Ottoman archives, significant Armenian archives remain closed to conceal evidence of Armenian terrorism and massacres.

If the resolution's proponents had done their homework and put aside religious bigotry, they would have reached the same conclusion as author and Professor Bernard Lewis of Princeton University: "[T]he point that was being made was that the massacre of the Armenians in the Ottoman Empire was the same as what happened to Jews in Nazi Germany and that is a downright falsehood. What happened to the Armenians was the result of a massive Armenian armed rebellion against the Turks, which began even before war broke out, and continued on a larger scale."

Brian Ardouny of the Armenian Assembly of America in a videotaped interview for a documentary on the Armenian Revolt clucked: "We don't need to prove the genocide historically, because it has already been accepted politically." Congress should reject that cynicism in defense of historical truth.

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