

CAVEAT EMPTOR...BUYER BEWARE!

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By Tatul Sonentz-Papazian, Watertown MA, 15 November 2008

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In the light of the present Turkish political and diplomatic foray into the Caucasus, with its benign façade and 'football diplomacy', one can't help but remember another planned incursion into the region, with ominous overtones. Indeed, in October 1993, Ankara, encouraged by the political instability resulting from a severe power struggle in Moscow -- pitting factions of the Glastnost Nomenclatura against each other -- had made all necessary preparations for a military assault on Armenia to achieve a Turkish imposed solution on the raging Nagorno Karabagh conflict which, at that time, was not going too well for the Azeri side.

Heir to a multi-national empire, The relatively new Kemalist Turkish 'nation state', has been trying very hard since its inception in the early '20-s, to assemble an exclusive "nationhood" on the historic patrimonies of indigenous nations, whose existence outdates recorded history. Faced with the inevitable irredentism of the original inhabitants of the territories on which the Turkish 'national' state has been grafted by a brutal, on-going process of ethnic cleansing through wholesale physical annihilation or cultural and religious assimilation of all minorities, Ankara has resorted to any and all methods to manufacture a 'national identity' at the expense of its minorities and hapless neighbors.

This long-standing disregard for factual integrity -- at the genuine dismay and astonishment of legitimate scholars and intellectuals, both Turkish and foreign -- has visibly undermined the formation of a credible and secure Turkish self-image as well as the assessment of Turkey's rightful place and legitimacy in the modern world. Given these facts, a certain amount of insecurity - - and paranoia concerning chronically restive minorities and neighbors - have been instrumental in the shaping of both domestic and foreign policies pivoting around a stance of unyielding denial of the factual narrative of events as perceived and subscribed to by the rest of the civilized world.

In 1921, after pushing the Sevres Treaty off the docket of world diplomacy with the collusion of major powers and international oil cartels, Ataturk -- who, with the active support of the Soviets, had already grabbed Western Armenian lands -- in anticipation of future litigations resulting from a possible revival of the Armenian Case, insisted on the inclusion of the Armenian provinces of Nakhijevan and Karabagh in the newly formed Azerbaijani Republic as "autonomous" regions ruled by Baku. This far-reaching diplomatic maneuver pushed the boundaries and the immediacy of future Armenian irredentism from Western Armenia to the heart of the Caucasus, creating a long range "buffer" confined within the domain of the newly created Tatar republic of Soviet "Azerbaijan", while giving Turkey ample time to 'digest' Western Armenia.

Eighty-seven years after these events, on a recent visit to Washington, Ahmet Davutoglu, the chief schemer of Turkish foreign policy in recent years, tried to warn, then Democratic Party presidential candidate Sen. Barack Obama, against any revision of the existing American policy of denial concerning the recognition of the Armenian Genocide, at the same time emphasizing the present Turkish administration's readiness to improve relations with Armenia. Furthermore, In remarks made at a Brookings institute event on October 28, the Turkish diplomat stated, that Ankara wishes "to have best relations with Armenia," and "good relations" with Armenians of the diaspora, and that Ankara "does not see Armenia as a threat..."

Then, responding to a question of the Armenian Reporter, Mr. Davutoglu stated, that President Gul's recent visit to Yerevan had been made for "...the purpose of improving relations, and not as a reaction to the crisis in Georgia..." and as a response to the question put to him by a senior staff member of the House Foreign Affairs Committee as to Ankara's thus far entrenched stand on the Nagorno Karabagh issue, he clearly intimated, that unlike its firm position on the Armenian Genocide, Ankara may consider dispensing with its preconditions on a settlement of the Karabagh conflict...

After more than eight decades, the very same aggressor who, with the blessings of the Soviets, had planted the seeds of inter-ethnic clashes, wants to reap the harvest, playing the role of a pacifier and "arbiter" in the Nagorno-Karabagh conflict, by offering the Armenians what de facto is already theirs, in exchange for their de jure rights, imbedded in the Treaty of Sevres, hoping, that the nascent Armenian irredentism will thus be silenced once and for all at the expense of Azerbaijan's 'territorial integrity'...A cynical example of Kemalist Turkey's foreign policy towards its neighbors.

A brief review of related events of the past century may throw light on the emergence of 'modern' Turkey and its modus operandi in crisis management.

In 1915, before the Ottoman Empire entered the war on the side of the Central Powers, declaring war on the Allies of the Entente Cordiale, and starting the Armenian "deportations" as the first stage of a carefully planned and executed genocide, the Armenians, the Kurds and the Greeks in Asia Minor together, constituted the majority of the population.

Six years later, the defeated Ottoman Empire signed the Treaty of Sevres, which assigned Eastern Thrace and the Smyrna district to Greece, while discussing a separate and independent Greek state in the Pontus. The Allied Powers took these steps based on a conclusion best formulated earlier, in 1920, by the president of the Supreme Allied Council, Alexander Millerand, who stated: "The Turkish government not only failed in its duty to protect its non-Turkish citizens from the looting, violence and murders, but there are many indications that the Turkish government itself was responsible for directing and organizing the most cruel attacks against the populations, which it was supposed to protect." Indeed, the Young Turks had sought to rid themselves of troublesome non-Muslim ethnic groups in order to build an exclusively Islamic-Turkic "super nation" on the territories of the crumbling, once multi-national Ottoman Empire.

The endemic persecution of non-Muslims had intensified earlier, during the Balkan Wars of 1912 – 1913, in the form of repeated lootings, expulsions and murderous pogroms, and the harassment of the peaceful civilian population intensified after the wars to such a degree, that on May 25, 1914, the Ecumenical Patriarchate found it necessary to sound the alarm by publicly declaring that

At the conclusion of World War I, after 40 long months of war, with considerable overt and covert foreign assistance and intrigue, the Kemalist forces secured the collapse of the Greek military front in Anatolia and reoccupied Asia Minor. They entered Smyrna on September 8, 1922 and set the city on fire, completing the genocidal cycle by savagely decimating the helpless population of both the Greek and Armenian communities of the city, in plain view of Allied warships anchored around the harbor, whose crews, by and large, limited their "rescue" operations to photographing and filming the unfolding drama of that historic holocaust...

On 24 July, 1923, the Treaty of Lausanne ended the Greek-Turkish war and imposed the arbitrary exchange of 300,000 ethnic Turks from Greece for the 1,400,000 Greeks who had survived the murderous course of the Kemalist ethnic cleansing. Thus, the native Greek inhabitants of Asia Minor had to give up their ancestral homes to the Turks after more than 3,000 years of maintaining a civilization that had laid the intellectual and humanistic foundations of democracy and the modern Western World, as we know it.

Another bastion of Hellenic culture, the historic island of Cyprus, which after centuries of Ottoman misrule and foreign dependency had finally achieved sovereignty in 1960, barely fourteen years later, on July 20, 1974, was invaded by the Turkish armed forces, in blatant violation of the UN Charter and all relevant principles and norms of international law. The Turks tried to justify their high-handed action by the July 15, 1974 coup d'état instigated by the Greek military junta in Athens against the Cyprus Government, a regime against which, through active collusion with the Turkish minority of the island, Ankara itself had been plotting since the very start of Cypriot independence, trying to discredit and destabilize the Greek majority administration in its attempts to establish ethnic harmony through democratic methods.

Today, while knocking on the doors of Europe, begging to be admitted in the EU, the Turks still keep one third of Cyprus under occupation, having set up a puppet "Turkish republic" recognized only by Ankara. In a move reminiscent of their exploits in the Caucasus 52 years earlier, they have managed to move the historic boundaries of Greek irredentism away from the Kemalist state's borders, into the confines of a historically recognized Hellenic island nation.

To conclude, let us get back to South Eastern Anatolia where the Kurds of Turkey are still denied basic human and civil rights. After numerous bloody uprisings since the end of World War I, and the arrest and incarceration of Ocalan, the leader of the latest and longest lasting insurgency, Turkey has managed – at least for the time being -- to push its native Kurdish problem into Iraq, making sporadic punitive armed intrusions – like the one planned for Armenia on October 1993 -- into Iraqi Kurdistan, trying to make sure that Kurdish irredentism remains a purely Iraqi -- perhaps even Iranian and Syrian – problem. After all, there are no Kurds in Turkey, only misguided 'Mountain Turks...'

The fact is, behind the benign mask of present Turkish diplomacy, seethes the murderous face of the Grey Wolf. In response to the latest Turkish sales-pitch in the Caucasus, we can only respond: Caveat emptor... Buyer beware!

