CONSUL'S DENIAL SHELL GAME

Posted on March 18, 2015 by Keghart



Category: Opinions

Aram Hagopian, Toronto, 18 March 2015

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The consul-general states: "Turks were also killed and massacred before, during and after the First World War." The two losses are not related. The Armenians had nothing to do with Turkish deaths, but the Turks had everything to do with Armenian deaths. Turkish losses were the result of war (Turkey was an ally of Germany and Austria) against France, Britain, Russia and later America. Turkey's dead were combat casualties. The Armenian civilian losses were the result of a government sponsored extermination. Even pro-Turkish writer Michael M. Gunter rejects such comparison. Mr. Gunter wrote: "That even more Turks (than Armenian) also died during World War I is both true, but largely irrelevant to the argument here because most of the many Turkish deaths resulted from hostilities against the Allies, not the Armenians."

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In regard to the legal definition of the word 'genocide' and its applicability to the Armenian case, the Turkish diplomat states: "...there is no such court decision". Apparently the envoy suffers from amnesia. The Turkish courts-martial of 1919–20 sentenced the masterminds of the Genocide: Talat, Enver, Cemal and others to death in absentia. If the envoy's memory fails and he cannot remember the early days of the Republic of Turkey and its court-martial verdicts, how about the 2011 Argentinian court ruling which stated that "the systematic killings of 1.5 million Armenians in 1915-1923 amounted to a crime of genocide by the Turkish state." How about the U.S. High Court decision to decline a hearing to force the Commonwealth of Massachusetts to include Armenian Genocide denial material in its education curriculum? Last but not least the decision of Judge Donovan W. Frank of the U.S. District Court in St. Paul to dismiss a lawsuit against the University of Minnesota for teaching materials using the word Genocide to describe the Armenian killings.

The consul-general cites the same half-dozen historians and writers to back his allegation that "there is no consensus… among academics" about the Genocide of Armenians. Practically everyone listed on the Turkish so-called academics roster has taught history at institutions where their chairs have been funded by the Turkish government. These historians have close relationships with the government of Turkey and have privileged access to Turkish historic archives and are provided with all-expense paid trips to Turkey. The publication of their books is often funded by the government of Turkey. Many genocide scholars have questioned the credibility of these half-dozen historians.

Hundreds of respected historians and scholars, in addition to 120 Holocaust experts and statesmen have studied the relevant facts related to the "events of 1915" and have concluded that the massacre of the Armenians constituted genocide. Indeed, every single independent panel of experts convened to review the facts of these events has also so concluded. The consul-general doesn't want to talk about this fact.

What happened to the Armenians was not the result of "civil strife", "rebellion" or "military necessity," as Turkish diplomats have claimed. The Armenian Genocide was a state-sponsored and a state-sanctioned plan. At a 1910 conference in Salonika, the Young Turks leader Talaat Pasha stated: "There can be no question of equality until we have concluded our task of Ottomanizing the empire." Three months later the Young Turks leadership approved Talaat's plan at a secret meeting.

The historical reality of the Armenian Genocide is well documented. It is not what the "Armenians say" but what international historians, statesmen of repute, and genocide experts have said repeatedly.

Re the consul general's allegation that Armenians have turned the cold shoulder to Turkish overtures of peacemaking, I would like to point out numerous attempts made by the Armenian government and the Armenian Diaspora to engage in dialogue with the Turkish government. These attempts have failed because of the Turkish government's intransigent and unreasonable conditions.

The Turkish Armenian Reconciliation Commission (TARC) is a prime example. Turkish and Armenian members of TARC agreed to submit the arbitration of the Armenian Genocide issue to a third party—the International Centre for Transitional Justice (ICTJ). But when the ICTJ's report concluded that what happened to the Armenians in Ottoman Turkey was a classic case of genocide and fulfilled four out of five conditions set by the UN Genocide Convention, the Turkish government pulled the plug on TARC by asking its Turkish members to withdraw from the commission.

Immediately after the signing of the Protocols, the Turkish Government started setting preconditions and new demands to ratify the Protocols and open the border. It was obvious that Ankara was not sincere in its efforts to normalize its relation with Armenia. Furthermore, the Turkish government's intention was to deceive the international community and stop the Armenian Genocide recognition's momentum.

Howard Berman, US House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman, in an April 13, 2010 letter to his House colleagues stated: "The protocols have been gathering dust in the Turkish parliament since they were signed in October, and particularly in light of the preconditions established by the Turkish leadership, there is little likelihood that they will be ratified any time soon."

The Turkish government's manipulative offer of creating "joint historical commission" is akin to the neo-Nazis' suggestion of an independent, objective historical commission to determine whether the Holocaust took place or the Flat Earth Society's offer to hold an academic dialogue with 'National Geographic' about the true shape of the Earth.

The proposal for the creation of a "joint historical commission" is like reinventing the wheel. After 100 years and the publication of numerous history books, government documents (British, French, United States, and even then-Turkish allies Germany and Austria), photographs by war correspondents, massive coverage by Western journalists, missionaries and NGOs, and documentary films, it is redundant to try to prove what has been proven irrefutably countless times. Would anyone demand that a "joint historical commission" be formed to question whether the Holocaust took place?

Astonishingly, the consul-general claims that the Armenian Genocide is not "taboo in Turkey." It is the height of hypocrisy for him to profit from the hard work and sacrifices of many courageous and righteous individual Turks and organizations, such as the Human Rights Association and Center for Truth Justice Memory. Any attempt made in the Turkish civil society to break down the "taboo" in Turkey was due to the hard work of these honorable individuals and groups.

Successive Turkish governments, including his current bosses in Ankara, did nothing to break the Armenian Genocide "taboo" in Turkey. On the contrary they persecuted and harassed everyone who

dared to challenge the government line including the few brave Turks who called the Armenian Genocide for what it is. Conveniently, the consul-general forgot to mention Article 301 of the Turkish penal code which punishes anyone who dares to use the word Genocide.

It is surreal to read the consul-general sensitivity to the "denialism" label. If he wants to eliminate the "unfair" description of "denialism", he can advise his government to make a clear-cut statement recognizing what their predecessors did to the Armenians, instead of playing a shell game with cynical, callous, and meaningless "condolence" statement such as the one Erdogan sent last year to Armenians.

According to the Turkish representative in Toronto, the Turkish government is providing an "opportunity for Armenia to become" a mature nation by attending the Gallipoli centennial on April 24. How about the maturity of the Turkish government? Jack Nusan Porter, Genocide scholar and the author of a number of books, including "Genocide and Human Rights" and "The Genocidal Mind," recently wrote the following in the 'Boston Globe': "It would take a psychiatrist schooled in political psychology to understand Turkey's motives . Sadly, Turkey has a deep inferiority complex, especially its leaders, who have brainwashed their people into believing all this. Germany is a strong country that knows that you first have to admit an evil to yourself in order for you to mature as a nation. Turkey, in short, needs to grow up. Sadly, as it becomes more and more fundamentally Islamic, it will be less likely to recognize someone else's pain."

"People who live in glass houses shouldn't throw stones." In the future the Turkish consul-general should remember the proverb before advising other nations how to behave.

Armenians do not bear any animosity towards the Turkish people. On the contrary, we sympathize with the Turkish people. They have been misled for too many years by their own government. We are confident that once the Turkish government halts its campaign of falsification of history and focuses on the Genocide issue without hysteria and paranoia, the Turkish people will be able to acknowledge the misdeeds of their predecessors and extend a hand of friendship to the Armenian people.

As genocide scholars have said, the last act of genocide is the denial of that act. It is because of the Turkish government's refusal to face its dark past that the process of healing, which is essential to peace, has not begun for Armenians. Reconciliation and forgiveness cannot take place without healing.