IT'S TOUGH BEING A TURK

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Category: Opinions

Avedis Kevorkian, Philadelphia, PA USA, 21 December 2011

Between the time that I thought of writing this essay and getting to my chair and turning on the computer some items came to mind.

You may have heard about the young teen-ager who was going out on a date with the popular football hero of the high-school and the target of every young girl's dream. This being her first date, her mother stayed up for the daughter's return. When she came home, her mother asked how the evening went. The young girl said that all went well and seemed happy, and the mother probed for more information, whereupon the young girl replied, "He knows a lot of dirty songs." The mother was aghast. "What," she screamed, "he was singing dirty songs to you?" The teen-ager said, "No, he was whistling them."

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And, then, I recalled something that happened when I was living in London and was active with a Greek Cypriot organization that is working to get the Turks out of Cyprus. A group of us attended a Seminar on the anniversary of the Turkish invasion. When the speakers had exchanged their views, the audience was invited to ask questions. Because the event was being recorded, the questioners were asked to give their names before they asked the question.

When I was recognized, I gave my name but before I could say another word, someone from the other end of the hall started shouting at me and denying the Armenian Genocide and calling me and all Armenians liars. Everyone was taken aback. Some people began to laugh, and a broad smile appeared on the face of one of the panelists--the pro-Turkish speaker. The shouter went on and on until his friends silenced him and took him out of the room. Eventually, I asked my question––which I do not now recall and which was anti-climatic.

I begin with the above because I have concluded that it is is very hard being a Turk.

Just think a moment.

France passed an 11-word resolution in 2001 which acknowledged the historical fact of the Armenian Genocide ("France Recognizes the Genocide of the Armenians in World War One"). It did not mention the words: "Turkey," "Turks," "Turkish," "Ottoman," Ottomans." Yet, the Turks ranted and raved, recalled the Ambassador, and made all kinds of threats.

A few years ago, in Cardiff, Wales, a *khatchkar* was erected with a nine-word memorial to the Armenians ("To the Victims of the Armenian Genocide of 1915"). It did not carry the words: "Turkey," "Turks," "Turkish," "Ottoman," "Ottomans." The Turks ranted and raved. Vandals destroyed the *khatchkar*, shortly afterward. (It has been replaced.)

As I write this, France is considering making illegal the denial of the Armenian Genocide––just as it is illegal to deny the genocide of the Jews. Nowhere in the measure currently being debated is there anything about Turkey or punishing the Turks. Yet, the Turks are ranting and raving, are threatening the French, are threatening to withdraw the Ambassador (Yes, of course, he returned shortly after he was recalled in 2001), and etc.

A Frenchman ignorant of his country's history could well imagine that it was France which committed the Genocide of the Armenians and was finally getting around to acknowledging the fact. A Welshman, ignorant of his country's history could well imagine that it was Wales that produced the victims of 1915.

Yet, it is the Turks who recognize themselves anytime the words "Armenian Genocide" (and, any reference to 1915) as the villains. It is not necessary for any resolution, any monument, to also bear the words ". . .by the Turks" for the Turks to get excited. Instinctively, the Turks recognize that the words "Armenian Genocide " and "Turkey" are on the opposite sides of the same coin.

Like the sweet young thing who recognized dirty songs when they were whistled, the Turks recognize themselves when "Armenian Genocide" is mentioned or referred to. So, do give a sympathetic thought to the poor Turk who must rise and blast away even when he hears an Armenian name at a Cyprus-based seminar.

Come to think of it, I am reminded of an incident my mother related that took place in Marseille, France, when she was living there, in the early 1920s. There was in her neighborhood a wife who was having an "affair" behind the back of her husband. Everyone, apparently knew about it. One day, the husband found his wife and her lover en *flagrant délit* (don't the French have a wonderful way with words?), he killed them both. All the neighbors, it appeared, were with the husband and kept quiet. The parents instructed their children to say that they knew nothing, should they see the police.

Sure enough, when police appeared––not, my mother said, about the disappearance but routinely––the children ran to the police and said that they knew nothing. When asked what they

knew nothing about, the children were puzzled and said they didn't know. Their curiosity piqued, the police began to make all sorts of enquiries and, in time, discovered what had happened. The husband was arrested and tried––and acquitted.

If the Turks persist in denying what they are not accused of, surely, in time, even the most disinterested observer is bound to ask, "But, what are you denying?" Then the denying Turk will have to stutter his way out of the blunder.

Whenever I have any discussion with a Turk (including, once, with an Ambassador), I always talk about the "two-million victims."

Invariably, the Turk will say, "Two million? I thought it was one-and-a-half million." Whereupon I reply, "All right. You are a Turk, and if you say 'one-and-a-half million,' I will accept it." Then the stuttering begins.

Yes, it is tough being a Turk.