PERFIDIOUS ALBION

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Category: Opinions

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"After agreeing upon a Brexit deal with the European Union, the first free trade agreement the U.K. signed was with Turkey." New Statesman*, 27 April, 2021.*

The alacrity by which the U.K signed the agreement with Turkey shouldn't surprise people who are familiar with the 400-year relation between England and the Ottoman Empire, between Britain and the Ottoman Empire, and finally between Britain and Turkey.

For a nation whose sons and daughters take pride in being realists and wise to the ways of the world, Armenians have demonstrated a naïve belief that the West is their friend. Consequently, Armenians have assumed the West would rescue them from the savage executioner who calls the Armenians and the West "infidel", denies committing genocide, and continues to threaten Armenia.

Armenians have chosen to believe that novelist Anatole France reflected French policy towards Armenians and that the compassion of Franz Werfel, the kindness of Karen Jeppe and Maria Jacobsen, the truth-telling of the late Robert Fisk and that of Britain's *The Guardian* newspaper reflected the vision and policies of their governments. Armenians forget that Prime Minister Boris

Johnson, like most of his predecessors going back to the early 17th century, has been indifferent to the plight of the Armenians.

While *The Guardian* and *The Independent* support Armenians, the BBC is anti-Armenian and so is U.K's highest circulation newspaper . The latter offered extensive coverage to Erdogan's condemnation of President Biden's decision and pointed out that Turkey is still seeking to establish "good neighborly" ties with Armenia. Britain's most popular newspaper also quoted Erdogan's questioning of the number of the Armenian who were slain during the genocide. The tabloid added the Hamidian massacres of 1896 were a result of the Ottoman Bank's seizure by Armenian militants. A few desperate Armenians take over the bank (majority ownership by the British and the French) and then as punishment, 200,000 to 300,000 innocent Armenians are killed. Sounds fair. The British newspaper added the kicker: "As the Ottomans fought Russian forces in eastern Anatolia in WWI, many Armenians formed partisan groups to assist the invading Russian armies." The Armenians had it coming to them.

We are grateful to Baroness Caroline Cox for defending Armenian rights but are blissfully ignorant that of U.K's hundreds of barons and baronesses, Madame Cox is the only one who speaks about Armenian rights.

While nowadays Germany has the shameful distinction of being Turkey's best friend, Britain has

been a friend of the Turks since Queen Elizabeth I's reign in the late 16th century. After Germany, Britain is the biggest importer of Turkish goods. Eight percent of Turkey's exports are to Britain. Some 2.5 million Britons vacation every year in Turkey.

In 1583, Queen Elizabeth I exchanged ambassadors with Ottoman Turkey and in 1600 England formed an alliance with Ottoman vassal state Morocco. England did so although Morocco belonged to the "brotherhood" of the Barbary Coast pirates who preyed upon European shipping in the western Mediterranean and enslaved passengers and crews. Most of the money stolen, plus the ransom to free the "slaves" and the plunder were sent to their master—the sultan in Constantinople. These raids on fellow Europeans apparently meant nothing to England.

When the Ottomans laid siege to Vienna in the 1680s as a prelude to further conquests of Europe,

England retained its warm relations with the Turks. Throughout the 17th and 18th centuries England had wide-ranging commercial relations with the Ottomans. Being Ottoman's best friend in Europe, England acted as mediator in wars between European states and the imperialist Ottomans. The Turks wanted their friend to supervise the proceedings. Thus, England/Britain was the mediator at the Treaties of Carlowitz, Passarowitz, Sistova, and others.

Other than a brief misunderstanding in 1807, throughout the 19th century, 10 Downing Street remained the Ottomans' bodyguard against the Russian Empire. England—now called Britain—also saved the Ottoman Empire from Egyptian conquest when London threatened Ibrahim Pasha (son of Egypt's Muhammad Ali) to withdraw from Asia Minor. In the mid-1850s, Britain and several European states went to war (Crimean War) against Russia in defense of the Ottomans. Britain scuttled the Treaty of San Stafano (1876) between Russia and the Ottomans. As a result, the relief Armenians of the Ottoman Empire had been promised at **San Stefano** became a pipe dream. For its mendacity, Britain was awarded with Cyprus by Sultan Abdul Hamid II.

Although some British politicians spoke at Westminster on behalf of the suffering Armenians, Britain didn't lift its fingers to protect the Armenians during the Hamidian Massacres (1895). After all, their fleet couldn't climb Mount Ararat, although it could climb Mount Kilimanjaro and the much-higher Mount Everest.

Until the 11th hour of the start of the First World War, the British kept offering bribes to the Young Turks to stay out of the war. On May 27, 1915, Britain, along with France and Russia warned the Ottoman government that they would hold its members personally responsible for the crimes carried out against the Armenian citizens of the Ottoman Empire. The statement said the killings were categorized—under the terms of contemporary law—as a crime against humanity and civilization. After the war, Britain—following pro-forma political manoeuvres--made peace with the genocidal Turks. The three main Young Turk leaders were not punished by the British government. Britain maintained its friendly relations with Ataturk's dictatorship and the military juntas which have frequently ruled Turkey since WWII. The relationship was further buttressed when Turkey joined NATO.

Starting in the '60s, Britain was a chief supported for the accession of Turkey to the European Union.

In 2010, Prime Minister Cameron expressed his anger at the "slow pace of Turkey-EU negotiations."

In recent decades, as more and more states began to recognize the Armenian Genocide, Britain stayed obdurate in its denial of the Armenian Genocide although her most important newspaper covered the massacres and the genocide almost on a daily basis. In *The Times of the Armenian Genocide*—a two-volume book—compiler and editor Katia M. Peltekian of Lebanon reproduced *The Times* and *Sunday Times* reports, articles, and editorials covering the prolonged Turkish depravity against the Armenian people. Peltekian cited 2,500 items covering the period from 1875 to 1905 and 1,000 pieces covering the period between 1914 and 1923. Several additional books can be compiled from the reports of other British newspapers and magazines.

In 1995, Foreign Minister Douglas Hogg advised his diplomats not to attend genocide memorial services. A U.K government document says Anglo-Turkish relations are too important to be jeopardized by the genocide issue because "Turkey is neuralgic and defensive about the charge of genocide."

In 2004, Thorda Abbott, UK ambassador to Armenia said: "I do not think that recognizing the events as genocide would be of much use."

As a result of American recognition of the genocide, the Labour Party issued the first-ever statement on the Armenian Genocide. MP Catherine West issued a statement on behalf of the Labour Party on the Armenian Genocide which condemned the genocide and said: "Labour stands with the Armenian people in condemning the historic and present act against them."

Huh? Where has the Labour Party been since WWI? Did the compassionate socialists and humanists of that party hear only recently about the Armenian Genocide?

Decades ago, when Britain ruled over one-quarter of the world's surface and the British boasted that the sun never set on their empire, Princeton University Professor Duncan Spaeth said: "I know why the sun never sets on the British Empire. God wouldn't trust an Englishman in the dark."

Racist? Cruel?

As Hamlet said: "Cruel only to be kind."

Comments



Misak Ohanian – 2021-05-20 09:40:36

Dear Colleagues, I am not sure the following statement is accurate. "As a result of American recognition of the genocide, the Labour Party issued the first-ever statement on the Armenian Genocide. MP Catherine West issued a statement on behalf of the Labour Party on the Armenian Genocide which condemned the genocide and said: "Labour stands with the Armenian people in condemning the historic and present act against them." Unless I am mistake this was a statement by one British MP and there have been several such statements by various individual British MPs but not by the respective Political parties that I am aware of. I stand to be corrected. However I will share with you the following from the archives of the British Labour Party From the Pages of History 1920: Labour Party's protests against the treatment of Armenia by the Allied Powers The Manchester Guardian (The Guardian) Friday, 27 February 1920 p. 7 c. 3 LABOUR PROPOSAL FOR ARMENIA (FRANCE AND CILICIA) The Advisory Committee of the Labour party on International questions have issued a long resolution in which they state that the Labour party protests against the treatment of Armenia by the Allied Powers. In the opinion of the Labour party the minimum programme which the Allied Governments are bound in honour to carry out includes: - 1. The entire region known as Turkish Armenia must be released absolutely from Turkish sovereignty. 2. The best settlement would have been to place the whole of this region for a term of years and under strict conditions under the control of a single mandatory Power, charged to maintain religious and racial equality between the different elements of the population, to promote goodwill between them, and to train them to govern their country in common. But the party recognise that if America stands aside the country may have at least temporarily to be divided. But if a mandate for the south-western districts (Cilicia, Diarbekr, Kharput) is given to France, they demand that it shall be conferred under the strict conditions referred to above, and that at a date to be specified in the mandate the population shall be given an opportunity of deciding whether they wish to govern themselves as a separate State or to reunite with the rest of Armenia. 3. The remainder of Turkish Armenia ought to be attached at once to the independent Armenian Republic, already in being in Trans-Caucasia. 4. The party protest against any idea of subordinating the Armenian settlement to considerations of Indian policy.



Dikran Abrahamian – 2021-05-11 12:54:23
Dear Vartan, Keghart.org (formerly Keghart.com) has a tradition of discussing within the editorial team the subject of the editorials. A first draft is drawn, circulated, commented on and then a final version is posted for the public. That's why the vast majority of the editorials do not bear an individual's name. It's a collective work. In the same manner, the Armenian text "Նշմարներ ՀՀ Ազգային ժողովի ընտրութիւններու նախօրէին" in this batch also does not bear the name of an individual. Dikran Abrahamian



Vartan – 2021-05-11 11:07:43
Very well researched & written article. Editors have names & have always been mentioned in the diaspora papers. Wish you mention the name of the writer.