

PAWN FOR THE WRONG PRESIDENT

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By **Donald Wilson Bush**, 6 June 2010



"Lee Hamilton violates his institution's charter by aiding the White House in appeasing Turkish leaders"

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Not least among those in the know are the president and executive director of the American Hellenic Institute who penned an open letter to WWC executive director Lee H. Hamilton on May 21, 2010 questioning the wisdom (but not the motive) of the WWC's choice for receiving this year's award. I am today, however, questioning the motive as well.

As a direct descendant of Woodrow Wilson's great-grandfather, and a bearer of the family name (and the President's proud heritage), I have been careful over 47 years to quietly honor the sacred space between family privilege and personal politics by purposefully recusing myself of every good and self-serving opportunity that might dishonor or misrepresent President Wilson's cherished legacy. I have also watched closely that the numerous institutions bearing his name do the same.

From the family's perspective this is important because institutions can, and often do (as a result of bureaucratic inertia and personal compromise) lose connection with the purpose and ideals that once animated the individual for whom an institution is named.

In the case of knowing what the WWC should stand for, one can find clues to what animated Woodrow Wilson the man by considering the catalogue of authorized biographies and Dr. Arthur Link's impressive pile of presidential papers carefully preserved by the Library of Congress and published by Princeton University Press.

One can also integrate with this official archive of public memorabilia, family stories, letters, journal

entries, newspaper pieces, photographs, personal affects and third party correspondence to find the spark of personal inspiration that animated the president's dreams. This I have done with Wilson's legacy for nearly three decades and I will continue to do it for the rest of my life.

From a personal perspective such as this, I can easily attest to the fact that Woodrow Wilson was every bit a poet as he was a politician. Consequently he was as much motivated by his own Scots-Irish wellspring of authenticity and substance as he was by his natural instinct for calculation and ambition. This is important to note because it has direct bearing on how one should interpret Wilson's attitude toward the Eurasian minor states that had been suppressed, unjustly attacked and systematically slaughtered by the Ottoman Turks.

In short, Woodrow Wilson was motivated at his core by a strong sense of poetic justice and hero projection—in his case born of a strong predisposition for Christian duty and compassion—that inspired young men of his day to advocate for the little guy and the underdog.

Although he didn't do this perfectly (his blind eye to the plight of African Americans is well noted), he did advocate, and advocated STRONGLY, for the successful emancipation of Eurasian minor states in the aftermath of WWI. This he did from his core, from his soul, from his heart. And this unique combination of a scholar's poetic passion for justice and Truth—wedded with a political statesman's genius for taking decisive, informed action in the time of national crisis—is that for which Woodrow Wilson the man is best remembered.

Without question, this fair reflection of Woodrow Wilson's highest ideals in favor of the underdog, as described above, is also part of that Wilsonian legacy for which the WWC was specifically chartered to preserve through their selection of programs, projects, scholars (and award recipients).

However, with the questionable choice of Ahmet Davutoglu to receive the WWC's highest award this year, I must now blow the whistle and redraw a blurred line that protects President Wilson's historic legacy from the unscrupulous ambitions of those presently representing WWC's bureaucratic leadership.

May I remind us all of the WWC's charter as reflected in the words of the WWC mission statement? I quote—the mission of the WWC is "to commemorate the ideals and concerns of Woodrow Wilson by: providing a link between the world of ideas and the world of policy; and fostering research, study, discussion, and collaboration among a full spectrum of individuals concerned with policy and scholarship in national and world affairs."

With all the recent blow back from their choice to honor Turkish Foreign Minister, Ahmet Davutoglu—a figure despised by many Eurasian people groups and thousands of activists worldwide punished as a result of his government's unjust domestic and foreign policies—the present WWC leadership should at least consult President Wilson's collected papers to see the error in their judgment. For if they do, they will find clear evidence of what was in the mind of our 28th president regarding his desire for the people of Eurasia and how, if he were alive today, he

might interpret the idea of promoting "collaboration among a full spectrum of individuals concerned" relative to today's US-Turkish foreign policy.

As contained in The Arbitral Award On Turkish-Armenian Boundary, dated November 22, 1920, we have a record of Wilson's own words: "I have approached this difficult task with eagerness to serve the best interests of the Armenian people as well as the remaining inhabitants, of whatever race or religious belief they may be, in this stricken country, attempting to exercise also the strictest possible justice toward the populations, whether Turkish, Kurdish, Greek or Armenian, living in the adjacent areas."

With this clear record of President Wilson's intent, what could possibly cause Lee Hamilton and his staff to cow-tow to White House pressure in this instance of Turkish diplomatic appeasement even at the cost of dishonoring Woodrow Wilson's personal wishes and thereby violating the WCC's very own mission and purpose?

Is it simply a matter of Mr. Hamilton playing his part in a "good-old-boy" insider deal between President Obama's State Department and the WWC? (That seems plausible given the fact that as the former chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, Hamilton promoted the careers of many staffers now writing Barack Obama's foreign policy—namely: Obama foreign policy advisor and deputy national security advisor Denis McDonough, Director for the Middle East Dan Shapiro, Obama campaign foreign policy speechwriter turned Deputy National Security Advisor for Strategic Communications Ben Rhodes, among others.)

Or could it possibly be a matter of Mr. Hamilton's unwavering American patriotism and an honest desire to ensure long-term US access to Turkish military airbases? In the past Turkish leaders have made veiled threats to alter the US-Turkey relationship should the US Congress officially recognize the historic truth of Turkey's role in the Armenian Genocide. Hmmm.

Or perhaps it's simply Mr. Hamilton's heartfelt commitment to free market economics. With billions of dollars in potential profits from natural gas pipelines at stake for Wall Street—not to mention his friend Dick Gephardt's multi-national Turkish lobby partners at the DC/Atlanta-based Gephardt Group—how much money will be lost should the US State Department fail to secure Turkey's compliance in the trillion dollar energy deal? (Google: "Nabucco" "South Stream" "pipeline" "Russia" to get the full picture.)

In the final analysis, it is most certainly a complex combination of all these factors that have influenced Mr. Hamilton's decision to do the President's bidding in this diplomatic business with Turkey. Sadly, even on a good day in Washington, DC, such blatant accounts of bureaucratic self-service like Mr. Hamilton's come at a price to the institutions they serve and the historical legacies they are chartered to protect.

In this case—even if it is simply a matter of helping out his good buddy, the President of the United States—Lee H. Hamilton has brought shame to halls of one of our nation's most cherished and tax-

payer supported institutions by violating its charter in favor of personal and self-serving ambitions.

Perhaps Mr. Hamilton should consider leaving his post at the WWC first, then figure out the best way to help his friend.

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