

# PRES. BUSH'S DUPLICITY ON THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE

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By Harut Sassounian, Publisher, The California Courier, 18 November 2010

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While running for President in 1988, Vice President George Bush issued the following statement: "The United States must acknowledge the attempted genocide of the Armenian people in the last years of the Ottoman Empire, based on the testimony of survivors, scholars, and indeed our own representatives at the time, if we are to ensure that such horrors are not repeated." Bush is the only Vice President who has made such a pledge on the Armenian Genocide.

After assuming the presidency in January 1989, however, Pres. Bush ignored his commitment on the Armenian Genocide, and actively tried to persuade the U.S. Congress not to recognize it. Within months of his election, Bush wrote to Senators Bob Dole and George Mitchell, and Congressmen Tom Foley, Richard Michel, Richard Gephardt, Janet Mullins, and Richard Lehman, informing them of his opposition to the pending congressional resolution on the Armenian Genocide.

On April 20, 1990, Pres. Bush issued his only "Presidential Message" on the occasion of "Armenian Remembrance Day," without, however, using the term "Armenian Genocide." He spoke about "...the terrible massacres suffered in 1915-1923 at the hands of the rulers of the Ottoman Empire. The United States responded to the victims of the crime against humanity by leading international diplomatic and private relief efforts.... On this 75th anniversary of the massacres, I wish to join with

Armenians and all peoples in observing April 24, 1990 as a day of remembrance for the more than a million Armenian people who were victims. I call upon all peoples to work to prevent future acts of inhumanity against mankind, and my comments of June 1988 represent the depth of my feeling for the Armenian people and the sufferings they have endured."

Over the years, analysts have offered different explanations as to why recent U.S. Presidents (except for Ronald Reagan) have not kept their promises to recognize the Armenian Genocide. Bobelian revealed that in 1987, a year before Vice President Bush made his promise to the Armenian-American community, the United States and Turkey had signed an extensive military and economic agreement, according to which the American government pledged to oppose any "inappropriate actions," such as the pending congressional resolution on the Armenian Genocide.

During the official signing ceremony held at the State Department on March 16, 1987, Secretary of State George Shultz and Turkish Foreign Minister Vahit Halefoglu exchanged letters extending through December 1990 the bilateral Defense and Economic Cooperation Agreement that had been in effect since March 29, 1980. According to this agreement, the United States made a commitment to provide high levels of military and economic support for Turkey. More significantly, Washington agreed to "vigorously oppose inappropriate actions which would be harmful to healthy U.S.-Turkish relations, to U.S.-Turkish military cooperation or to our efforts to provide security assistance to Turkey based on the needs of the Turkish Armed Forces."

When the 1980 agreement expired in 1985, the Turkish government cleverly dragged out the negotiations for its extension, while escalating its demands from the United States. After a series of diplomatic exchanges that lasted two full years, the Turkish side succeeded in extracting more and more concessions from the U.S., including the commitment to block congressional resolutions on the Armenian Genocide.

Vice President Bush must have known in 1988, when he made his deceptive promise on the Armenian Genocide, that the United States government had already signed an agreement with Turkey in 1987, pledging to "vigorously oppose inappropriate actions" that would damage U.S.-Turkish relations.

After Pres. Reagan's Proclamation of April 22, 1981 and the two House resolutions adopted in 1975 and 1984 acknowledging the Armenian Genocide, the Turkish government had good reason to insist on language in the 1987 agreement to block any further acknowledgments of the Armenian Genocide.

The Turkish scheme worked! Breaking his pledge to the Armenian community, Pres. Bush successfully lobbied the Senate in 1990 to prevent the passage of a resolution on the Armenian



