THE PROFESSOR AND PUTRID PROPAGANDA

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Perhaps it's churlish to expose a 96-year-old professor as a covert turcophile lobbyist, but when the academic is a sly, warmongering neocon with a 50-year history of unrepentant denial of the Armenian Genocide, the near-centenarian is not entitled to a pass.

We are referring to Prof. Bernard Lewis, a former British spy in Cairo, scholar of the Islamic world, adviser to irascible and bellicose Dick Cheney, coiner of the "Clash of Civilizations" hoax doctrine, the one-man think tank who called for the carpet-bombing of Iraq, and the sycophantic mandarin who predicted that Iran would unleash a nuclear attack on Israel on Aug. 22, 2006. No wonder this Oxbridge apologist of the far right has been called the "most significant intellectual influence behind the invasion of Iraq," although post-invasion he cowardly denied having anything to do with the invasion. The cynical denialist has made a career of doing violence to the truth whether it pertains to Armenians or to Arabs.

Those who follow the history of 20th century genocides may have first noted the British-American quackademic and imperial propagandist in 1961 when he wrote "The Emergence of Modern Turkey." In that book Lewis referred to the Turkish massacres of Armenians in 1915 as "holocaust." However, when the book was re-published the following year, he replaced "holocaust" with "slaughter," claiming that he wanted to avoid a comparison with the Holocaust. The Holocaust was sui generis. In 1985 the compromised professor signed a letter protesting the proposed US recognition of the Genocide of Armenians. When French historian Gerard Chaliand expressed his dismay for Lewis' denial of the uncontested truth, opportunist Lewis replied that the recognition would cause "the disruption of US-Turkish relations." In other words, for this "academic" expediency takes front seat while truth and justice are relegated to the back of the bus.

In November 1993 the peripatetic professor, in Paris to hype the sale of his books, was interviewed by 'Le Monde'. During the interview he repeated the lie that there was no genocide of Armenians. The Forum of Armenian Associations in France and the Ligue Internationale Contre le Racisme et Antisemitisme promptly sued the peddler of falsehood. The plaintiffs won the civil case and Lewis was fined.

It seems the mandarin-professor has been licking his wounds since and mourning the money he had to pay to the plaintiffs as part of his sentence. How else to explain his lengthy chapter ("Judgment in Paris") in his recent memoirs titled "Notes on a Century"? The unregenerate denier repeats his recycled falsehoods, knowing full well no Armenian would sue a doddering old fox, no matter how outrageous the falsehoods he spouts.

Space limitations prohibit a detailed expose of the professor's mendacity and fabrications. The propagandist professor, who doesn't hesitate to play fast and loose with the facts, remains, at 96, a steadfast and prolific panderer of propaganda Turkish style.

He starts his litany of Armenian Genocide misinformation with "When Turkey became a member of NATO in 1952, the Russians , not surprisingly saw this as a major strategic threat to the Soviet Union . . . they sought to mobilize anti-Turkish forces and turned in the first instance to the significant Armenian community in the US." There you have it: the publicity the Armenian Genocide has garnered was a deliberate Soviet machination during the Cold War! Incidentally, cagey Lewis is a master of nebulous, slippery, and weasel words such as "significant," "most," "some" and "in general."

Lewis the Fabulist says that in the post-WWI period "friendly relations developed between some (!) Turks and some (!) Armenians in the US and elsewhere (!) . . . the revival of the Armenian issue proved a powerful and effective weapon, mobilizing Armenians . . ." This must be breaking- news to Armenians who didn't know that their genocide became high profile, thanks to the Soviets.

In "Judgment in Paris" the peevish professor attacks French academics for not coming to his rescue and goes after prominent French newspapers such as 'Le Figaro,' 'Le Monde' and 'Liberation' for their alleged pro-Armenian bias. He says he was ambushed by the French media and accuses French-Armenians of being adept at news management. Finally, he mourns that he had only a "single valiant" lawyer while the Armenians had a battery. His analogy of the difference between his legal representative and that of the plaintiffs is telling. The careless, if not gaga, professor says, "I had as much chance as the Polish cavalry confronting the German tanks in 1939." Poor Professor Higgins, sorry, we mean Prof. Lewis.

Topping his own panegyrics of Turkey, Lewis wrote in 1995: "The Turks have always been fair and just and tender against the people and minorities under their patronage . . . Armenians responded with ingratitude and betrayal." Note the word "patronage" of Turks. Doesn't it remind you of a kindly uncle or guardian?

The massacre of Armenians was not genocide, like the Holocaust, because it "arose from an armed rebellion . . . seizing the opportunity presented by WWI rose in rebellion . . . in alliance with Britain and Russia." This sure would have come as news to genuine historians who know that Armenians were not allowed to have weapons under the 'patronage' of the Father Ottomans.

A man careless with the truth, Lewis then goes over the top and writes, "Persecution was mostly confined to endangered (!) areas while the Armenian population in other (!) parts of the Ottoman Empire, notable in big cities, were left more or less (!) unharmed . . . the Armenian populations in general (!) were not persecuted."

The Sultan of Professional Deniers concludes by saying, "No serious proof exists of the Ottoman government's decision and plan aimed at exterminating the Armenian nation . . ." While it's a waste of time to dissect the voluble professor's untruths, one of his critics has said, "Lewis' take is deeply creepy in the way it mimics deniers of the Nazi genocide of Jews." The professor, in other words, is blood brother to Holocaust deniers such as Robert Faurisson of France, David Irving of Britain and Ernst Zundel of Canada/Germany.

One might ask what motivates the lugubrious professor to trivialize the Genocide of Armenians. A turcophiliac since the late '30s, he learned Turkish and translated Turkish works and even wrote poetry in Turkish. Then he hit the jackpot in 1950. That year he was "granted privileged access" to Turkish archives—"the first Western to be allowed," he boasts. He felt "rather like a child turned loose in a toy show… or like an intruder in Ali Baba's cave." The caves where Turkish documents of the genocide have conveniently vanished.

Why did Ankara invite the former British spy and tall-tale spinner into its history inner sanctum? One doesn't need to be Mensa president to speculate that there was a *quid pro quo* in the invitation . . . we let you go through Ottoman documents and you become our mouthpiece and champion. With access to the Ottoman papers, Lewis could then scoop his scholarly competition and sell books. The Ankara strategy paid off in spades: the professor-spy has been a more effective Turkish agent than other propagandists and fellow members of Assembly of Turkish American Associations, such as Justin McCarthy, Heath Lowry, Guenter Lewy, Eberhard Jackel and the rest of the wolf pack.

The master of crimes of omission has written numerous pro-Ottoman and pro-Turkish government books and articles, always ignoring the egregious human rights record of Turkey. For his multifarious propaganda efforts on behalf of Turkey he was admitted (1972) as Honorary Member of the Turkish Historical Society and received 'Citizen of Honor' (1973) from the Turkish Ministry of Culture. In 1984 he became Honorary Member of the Ataturk Academy of History, Language, and Culture. In 1985 he was given the "Annual Education Award for Outstanding Achievement in the Promotion of American-Turkish Studies." In 1996 he received 'Honorary Doctorate' from the Ankara University and became (1997) an Honorary Member of the Turkish Academy of Sciences. The following year he won the Ataturk Peace Prize. His books have been translated into Turkish and are disseminated by the foreign ministry of Turkey through diplomatic and cultural channels. Over the years he has become friends with countless Turks and in the '70s he almost married an "aristocratic Turkish lady."

Since this impresario of obfuscation and banality has been criticized by Noam Chomsky, Norman Finkelstein, the late Edward Said, and famed Israeli writer Uri Avneri among a host of other observers of the Middle East, he is a near-pariah within the Middle East Studies Association of North America (the premiere collective of American scholars specializing in the region), has been reviled by a French court for his genocide falsifications, is condemned as the grey eminence of the Iraq War, and was ridiculed for his prediction of a nuclear strike by Iran on Israel on Aug. 22, 2006, one wonders how book publishers still commission this Pinocchio of Islamic studies. The answer is not difficult to find: the falsifier, the denier and the warmonger is an apostle of imperialism—first of British and now American. No wonder the blurb (by the 'Wall Street Journal') on his latest book hails him as "the world's foremost Islamic scholar" while someone at the august 'Baltimore Sun' emotes "Bernard Lewis, a towering figure among experts on the culture and religion of the Muslim world." Yes, indeed.

The shortcomings of the professor are many. While his Kemalist vision turned out to be wrong in

Iraq, his biggest failure is his politicization of history. Rather than confine himself to the objective standards of academe, Lewis has become a hands-on lobbyist for Turkey and adviser to controversial politicians. Israeli writer Avneri wrote that as a lobbyist of Turkey Lewis tried to influence the directors of the Holocaust Museum in Washington not to include references to the Armenian Genocide.

Lewis has, more than once, wondered why there's no talk of Turkish pain . . . after all, "more Muslims died during World War I than Armenians." This is standard Turkish propaganda *leger-de-main*. Lewis deploys misdirection to confuse readers between Turks and Muslims. Many Muslims did die, but not all of them were Turks, and they didn't die by Armenian hands. They died because Turkey declared war on Russia, France and Britain. In fact, many Arabs died at the hands of Turks. We know that many more Germans than Jews died during WWII, but we would guess that Lewis would never mention this fact and ask sympathy for the Nazis.

When righteous Turks such as Ragip Zarakolu are putting their lives on the line by exposing the Turkish butchery of Armenians, this pampered mandarin (with his silver hair, he is said to sashay as a biblical patriarch cum Oxbridge don at Washington functions) plays havoc with historic truth.

The wolf in sheep clothing concludes his poison chapter with the following words: ". . . for those who look to the future and who cherish a hope for better relations and better understanding between two peoples who can only be still further divided by the reiteration of old grievances and the rekindling of old hatreds." In other words, forget 1915. Look forward to Erdogan's Brave New Turkey as it tries to strangle Armenia with an economic blockade and by buttressing its cousins in Baku.

"The responsibility, the obligation, of a historian is to tell the truth as he sees it, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. He should not allow himself to be a propagandist or used by propagandists." Lewis wrote that sentence in "Notes on a Century." Lewis should read his own book.