SOLIDARITY WITH THE VICTIMS OF ALL GENOCIDES

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Having already tackled, for many decades now, those horrendous issues with consummate objectivity, and having produced many related books and articles, Desmond has written his latest book in a new 'mode', delving himself in the labyrinth of the concepts of Modernity and Modernisation in relation with the reality of genocide of the indigenous peoples of Turkey, namely Armenians, Kurds, Assyrians, Greeks, Greek Cypriots, and others.
Assembling, assessing and scrutinizing massive data and notes, Desmond has also drawn parallels with other lands and peoples where oppressive, state terror politics were and are carried out in the name of that same modality, that of Modernity and Modernisation, not forgetting to mention, of course, Civilisation and Democracy.

At this point of my reflections, I must point out that for me the real merit of a book is not only what it says and conveys, but also what it makes me to think about, to say what I think and to act upon it. In the few minutes I have for this presentation, allow me then to say the following.

A couple of years back, in a public meeting discussing the legal controversy of the war in Iraq, an Iraqi intellectual raged against the mere utterance of the word democracy, calling it an 'ugly' and 'dirty' word. He was raging, and rightly so, against the latter-day imperialism's camouflaged, nay deranged version of democracy that reflects the sterile ethics of bygone colonialism.

Activated with such deformed mantras, the most powerful military power on earth was decimating the heritage of a country and its culture, eventually annihilating over a million of its population, leaving behind nearly a million displaced children and close to five million Iraqi refugees roaming around both in neighboring countries and in their own homeland too. No surprise then that a banal refutation of a warmonger against the Iraqi intellectual's rage sounded what the formidable John Milton had once warned against such ambivalent refutations, saying: "They who have put out the people's eyes, reproach them of their blindness." (Apology, 1648)

It is true that the Turkish Parliament did not grant the vote of consent for the Turkish government to

indulge with the so-called coalition forces led by Uncle Sam to invade Iraq. Yet it is also true what the Canadian Action on the Kurdish Conflict in Turkey writes just recently: "Since 1993, over four thousand Kurdish villages have been destroyed and more than seventeen thousand killings of innocent Kurds have been carried out by The Turkish Special Forces. Following the March 29, 2010 municipal elections, fifteen hundred politicians, intellectuals, elected representatives, mayors and human rights activists have been jailed to date. As unacceptable as it is, hundreds of Kurdish children have been killed by The Turkish Security Forces since 1993 and today, about three thousand Kurdish children (aged 6 to 17) are in jail." It is obvious that the Turkish government relentlessly continues its undeclared war against its own citizens, but failing, nevertheless, to "put out the people's eyes", particularly in this case, the Kurdish people's eyes, or, for that matter, the Turkish people's eyes too, I tend to believe.

To keep the sanity of our political vision and not loose the focus of our historical perspective, we should also not forget that there was a country, in the Far East, where exactly 35 years ago, the same awesome military power that the world had ever witnessed failed and abysmally so to take the land and its people of millennial cultural heritage "back to the Stone Age", as vowed then by its megalomaniac military commander. The arrogance of the invading oppressor had wiped out from their own memories the fact that the Vietnamese people were fighting for at least two thousand years to free their land and themselves from successive foreign rules. No wonder then that the United Vietnam and the Vietnamese people prevailed.

Paradoxically, but tellingly so, the Vietnamese people and their internationalist leaders were not hesitating to guide their struggle with the millennial tools of what genuine democracy in essence meant, knowing quite well that once the 16th supreme commander of the country of the invading military force, President Abraham Lincoln had so eloquently envisaged democracy as "The rule of the people, by the people, for the people." Therein laid the modernity of the liberation struggle of the Vietnamese people.

In fact, the truth of the matter is, somehow not forgotten by the oppressed peoples of the world, that all the battle cries of freedom in the last twenty six centuries or so have been raised in the name of Democracy, whether in Turkey, in the Middle East, in Latin America and in the Far East, not to mention in the advanced capitalist countries where the mantra of profit-at-any-cost, namely globalisation leads the collateral damage inflicted upon language itself. Through their post-modernist, neo-con and neo-liberal abuse the concepts of Democracy, Socialism, Freedom, Modernisation, Human Rights, and what not, are made to lose their essential meanings and made to 'act' as their antinomies in real life.

Authorities of all kinds and hues often luxuriate in their prerogative to censor, expurgate, remove or cancel. The above-mentioned Canadian Action, the one referring On the Armenian Issue, writes: "Canada, along with another twenty five countries and over forty U.S. states, have recognized the Armenian Genocide. Turkey, however continues to deny and ignore the Armenian Genocide

committed by its former regime even to this day." Censorship has thus become an act of bureaucratic vandalism. It is activated mainly to deny the existence of a phenomenon, especially when the latter reflects and manifests the truthfulness of a painfully culpable historical reality.

No matter. All the censorship and negations notwithstanding, the essential and historical truth remains. Whether freedom from slavery, torture, foreign rule, poverty, from exploitation and child labour, discrimination, or freedom of speech, of conscience and of the human spirit etc., etc., even the screams for free markets, were all raised in the name of democracy, not to mention capitalism, which also came into being through that same tool. The same is true with all the humanist and Internationalist declarations and covenants, such as, just to mention a few, The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948, The Universal Declaration of the Rights of the Peoples, 1976, and most tellingly, The Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, 1948. Furthermore, when the exploitation of democracy by capitalism stretched to the limits of obscuring and hence impoverishing its potentialities, socialism became in its turn the battle cry of all those for whom genuine democracy is the only guarantee for a real and radical change, for a more equitable, tolerant and caring civil society. Therein lays, I believe, the modernisation of the struggle of the oppressed people of our world, particularly when considered the root meaning of the word, which simply means 'of the present time.'

The oppressor has failed to totally bamboozle the oppressed by its camouflaged modernisation mantras 'a la mode'. That's why Bertold Brecht's theatrical aphorism still continues to pinch our alter ego: "If sharks ruled the world, they would teach the little fish that it is a great honour to swim into the mouth of a shark."

The real message that Desmond's recent book conveyed to me is this: Sharks of the world beware. The little fish have no more an appetite for the great honour to serve your voracious appetites at your own banquets of total wastes in an ocean of hunger and debt.

Professor Pilikian's speech was delivered at Portcullis House, Westminster, London on the occasion of the Launch of Desmund Fernandes' book ***Modernity, "Modernisation and the Genocide of Kurds and "Others" in Turkey: "1915" within it Pre-and-Post Historical Periods***
The event was sponsored by Nia Griffith MP for Llanelli