THE INTERNMENT PLOT THICKENS

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Category: Opinions

By **Gary Antourian**, Toronto, 29 June 2013

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Demonstrating "tolerance" toward others is an essential quality which every person and society should practice, but tolerance should be extended to people who have the courage to admit their crimes and repent for them. To demonstrate tolerance to the Turkish government and its denial machine is disservice not only to the victims of the Armenian Genocide but also to all victims of genocides. Various Turkish governments and their denial industries not only did not recognize their predecessors' crime against the Armenian nation but instead inflicted upon subsequent generations of Armenians the most heinous, inhuman, and cruel experience through a farcical denial policy. By extending tolerance, without atonement and compensation, we set a precedent and send a message to the perpetrators of Genocide, Holocaust, and crimes against humanity that if a criminal persists in denying his crime he can get away with it. As many Genocide scholars have stated, the last act of genocide is its denial.

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Regarding the First World War Canadian interment issue, the presence of a Turkish organization representative on the Fund Council is telling. Can we imagine a Holocaust denier being appointed to the board of Holocaust education or memorialization institution? Who was the conduit to the appointment of the Turkish representative to the board?

Lubomyr Luciuk, who is on the Fund Council, is affiliated with the Ukrainian Canadian Civil Liberties Association (UCCLA). The UCCLA has a history of antagonism toward the Canadian-Armenian community and the recognition of the Genocide of Armenians. This hostility goes back to 1999 when John Gregorovich was the chairman of the UCCLA and of the Canadians for Genocide Museum coalition. At the time, Mr. Gregorovich was actively involved with the Turkish denial machine to suppress the memorialization of the Armenian Genocide in the Ontario Legislature.

Ironically Marsha Skrypuch, according to the UCCLA website, is on the current "Members of the Directory". The Armenian community is cognizant of Ms. Skrypuch's previous involvement with the Armenian Genocide and her commendable work to educate students on this issue, but that good work doesn't give her the right to rewrite history.

It's on record that since 2010 Marsha Skrypuch has been involved in research on the Canadian internment issue and has collaborated with many people, including William Darfler of Brantford. Darfler is the main researcher on the "Turkish" internment issue. He became involved in the story upon the request of Luciuk. Darfler was quoted in "Canadaturk" monthly (Jan. 15, 2010) as saying "He was intrigued and urged me to apply for a grant from the Canadian First World War Recognition Fund to study further."

Accordingly, he received $5,000 from the fund for his research. Darfler happens to be the darling of the Turkish media. One such media outlet even issued an appeal to its readers to help Darfler "with any information, sources, or even vague family stories about the event."

The most recent issue of "CanadaTurk" monthly in Toronto published an article about the Turkish consul-general's visit to Brantford, Ontario to meet Mr. Darfler and discuss the Turkish WWI internees' issue. The monthly published a photo of the two men at a local cemetery. Why is the Turkish consul-general getting involved in a local Canadian issue? What agenda is he pursuing? Are Canadian intellectuals and historians being manipulated by the Turkish government and its representatives?

An interesting aspect of this issue is an article in the "Armenian Weekly" (Sept. 25, 2010) in which

Betty Apigian-Kessel asked whether "the Armenians who arrived in Brantford were mainly from Keghi and were Turkish citizens, it was possible that some of the interned were Armenians?" Ms. Skrypuch replied: "No, all of them were Turks and I can tell that from their names.'' How could Ms. Skrypuch give such a definitive answer? How could she be sure that no Armenians or other ethnic minorities, who were living under the yoke of the Ottoman Empire, were among the internees when the facts clearly show that overwhelmingly the interned were not Turks, as your editorial stated. Furthermore, many Armenians, Christians, and other minorities often changed their names to Turkish to escape persecution by the Ottoman authorities.

The whole "Turkish internment" issue is a farce. It is reprehensible to see such revisionism in a country like Canada. It is abhorrent to witness the injustice which befell upon the victims of the internment almost 100 years ago, after their suffering. These people were wronged three times: First by the Ottoman Empire whose racist policies forced them to escape to save their lives; second, by the internment experience; and now by a handful of people who, for mysterious reasons, want to exploit the pain of the internees.

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