THE THUG, THE PROFESSOR, AND "JUST PAIN"

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Editorial, 30 July 2014

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Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan has bigger ambitions than the murderous maniacs of ISIS. Simply put Erdogan would like the Ottoman Empire restored in some shape or form (details to follow). In the spring of 2012, the irascible, cantankerous, and thuggish head of Turkey described his country's mission thusly: "On the historic march of our holy nation, the AK Party signals the birth of a global power and the mission for a new world order. This is the centenary of our exit from the Middle East . What we lost between 1911 and 1923, whatever lands we withdrew from, we shall once again meet our brothers in those lands." Translation: We are coming back…to Mosul, Kirkuk, Basra, Damascus… to a time when authoritarian Ottoman sultans were called "Ruler of the Black Sea and the White, ruler of Rumelia and Mingrelia, lord of Anatolia and Ionia, Romania and Macedonia, Protector of the Holy Cities, Steely rider through the realms of bliss, sultan and "padishah", Commander of the Faithful, Chief of the Ottoman armed forces…"

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Despite inconvertible proof to the opposite, Erdogan believes the Ottomans represented a golden

age. (Erdogan is not a Turk; he is the son of Laz immigrants from Georgia; Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu is a descendant of Karait Jews from the Crimea). A corrupt, violent, dictatorial, backward, theocratic, and racist empire ruled by degenerates and fratricidal sultans (almost every sultan rose to the throne by killing his male siblings) is Erdogan's City on the Hill. According to Erdogan the Ottoman sultanate wasn't just the golden age of the Turks: the five-century nightmare was also the golden age of the conquered, occupied people, the "raya" and the "gavoors". Davutoglu, the farrago's cohort recently argued: "The greatest injustice that has been visited on both history and the peoples in question is setting aside a shared history of the two peoples and the previous rich centuries, and beginning instead only with traumatic events like war and conflict…" Thus we, Armenians, and scores of other nations, which chaffed under the *yataghan*, should welcome Turkey's embrace and live in the Happy Valley of neo-Ottoman multiculturalism.

An empire, carved by the sword, which began its steady decline almost instantly after it hit its peak and then contributed practically nothing to the world over the next five centuries, except perhaps for the Iranian sweet which an ignorant English tourist called "Turkish delight". The Ottoman nomads could brandish the sword, rape and loot, but running a country wasn't in their cultural gene.

Which brings us the Erdogan's straight man (some would say the 'good cop' to his 'bad cop'), the platitude-dribbling, charisma-deficient Prof. Davutoglu and his recent ecumenical encyclical to Diaspora Armenians. In a 10-page article in the "Turkish Policy Quarterly" (Spring 2014) Prof. Davutoglu expounded on "just memory". Putting aside its clumsy phrasing, the professor's "just memory" has two sly features: first, what happened to Armenians wasn't genocide. Besides, they are mostly to blame for their plight because they plotted the destruction of the Ottoman Empire. The second feint of "just memory" is the "pain" suffered by Turks for the loss of their empire. The Dynamic Duo, which represents Turkey to the world, would like to see Armenians acknowledge the pain of the nation which almost succeeded in erasing it from the face of the Earth.

That both narratives are false is neither here nor there for the voluble duo which has re-jigged Turkey's traditional denialist strategy for consumption during the Genocide centenary.

It's redundant to address their first lie, but the second does merit attention. When erratic Erdogan and sanctimonious Davutoglu invite Armenians to recognize Turkey's pain, they sweep away a couple of pithy facts about the demise of their execrable Ottoman Empire.

The Ottoman Empire was a result of conquest. It was a conglomeration of occupied people and lands. Even its heartland Anatolia didn't belong to the Turks. It was the homeland of the Armenians, the Greeks, the Assyrians and the Kurds.

Being a failed, unlawful, despotic and imperial entity, it didn't deserve to survive.

The Turks lost most of the "Ottoman" lands because its Young Turk leadership was greedy for more lands, more conquests, more theft, rape and plunder. Eager to expand their sickly empire, the fascist Young Turks allied with Germany, hoping Emperor Wilhelm II would win the war and hand the

Balkans, the Caucasus, Egypt, and Cyprus on a plate to Turkey. The Young Turks miscalculated. "The Sick Man of Europe", hamstrung by an inefficient-archaic army and deep in debt, shouldn't have overextended itself. It lost the war. It was left with Anatolia and a parcel of land west of the Bosphorus.

The concept of cause-and-effect seems to be unjust state of affairs to Erdogan. For a nation which has pillaged its way from the deserts of Central Asia to the gates of Vienna, the cost of defeat baffle Erdogan and his scholarly friend.

Another reason—probably unknown to most people--for the Ottoman defeat was cited in the recent "World War I: The Global Revolution" by Lawrence Sondhaus. The historian wrote: The Ottoman Empire's quest to eliminate its own Armenian minority ranks among the leading causes for its collapse in World War I. In the face of multiple military threats (Gallipoli, Mesopotamia, Palestine, and the Hijaz), the Turks wasted valuable manpower in rounding up, relocating, and murdering hundreds of thousands of civilians, and at the same time deprived themselves of the services of a traditionally dynamic and productive people who would have made a net contribution to their war effort."

So Armenians have to shed tears for WWI Turkish losses: the war which gave the opportunity and cover to Turkey to launch the Genocide of Armenians.

There's an expression Armenians use in the face of preposterous lies and cringe-making chutzpah: "If I had two stomachs, one of them would explode."

Meanwhile, pass the Kleenex to Erdogan and Davutoglu for their just pain, shared pain, just memory, shared memory, wrong is right, true lies, Turkish trauma, Turkish angst, tender Turkish psyche...

"Just Memory"?

Please, Prof. Davutloglu. Your paper doesn't deserve even an "F-".