NAIVES R US

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Category: Opinions

By Jirair Tutunjian, Guest Editorial, Toronto, 26 July 2023

Far too many Armenians feel betrayed and shocked by the West's indifference to our just cause and Artsakh's plight. When justice is on our side, why does the West turn its back on us we ask? The very naïve among us are also surprised fellow Christian West doesn't support us--"the first country to become Christian." These Armenians seem to be unaware that the West is no longer Christian and even when it was Christian religion was, for centuries, of no consequence in their foreign policy.

Rather than enumerate all the states of the West which have ignored our existential struggle and continue to do so, let's focus just on one: England/Britain/the United Kingdom. For five centuries, that island northwest of Europe has led Europe in cynicism, in lack of principles, and in contempt of justice and fairness in foreign affairs. Re its Christian identity: the fact that early in the 17th century King James I commissioned the publishing of a glorious translation of the Bible didn't mean he or the government he led respected the teachings of the Holy Book.

In an era when one could be jailed or worse for mispronouncing the Lord's Prayer, Queen Elizabeth I (1558-1603) began building bridges with the Ottoman Turks for mercantile reasons. The "Virgin Queen" courted the Ottomans and sent presents to the sultan at a time when travelers, including English, were frequently captured by Western Mediterranean's Barbary pirates whose lord was the Ottoman Sultan. The pirates shared the proceeds from the sale of their one million captives with the sultan. They also sent beautiful female captives to Constantinople to become the sultans' concubines.

Although the Ottoman Turks had recently threatened to conquer Europe by land (Siege of Vienna, 1529) and by sea (Battle of Lepanto, 1571), England launched a PR campaign to polish the image of the Ottomans for commercial reasons. Ottoman tyranny, corruption, barbarism, injustice, inhumanity, and cruelty towards their Christian minorities were neither here nor there for the English and their queen: gold trumped all.

In vain Cardinal Bessarion, the unofficial leader of the Greek exiles in Italy after the fall of Constantinople, warned the Ottoman Turks were planning to invade Italy and the rest of Europe.

To gain friends and influence people in the Ottoman Empire, an Englishman wrote a ridiculous play which had Alexander the Great and Julius Caesar worship statues of Prophet Muhammad. The fact that Alexander lived 900 years before the birth of Muhammad while Julius Caesar about 700 years earlier were trifle details.

In 1656, Francis Osborne *("Political Reflections upon the Government of the Turks")* considered the Turkish ignorance of classical literature as a boon because it allowed them to focus on the business of government. Osborne contemporary Paul Rycaut, secretary to Earl Winchilsea, ambassador extraordinary to the Ottomans for King Charles II, claimed *("The Present State of the Ottoman Empire,")* the Turkish government a model form of rule. He even argued the Turk had been sent by God as a

"chastisement of the sins and vices of Christians." He praised the Ottoman custom of selecting captured Christian youth for the imperial seraglio.

One of the English first steps to improve the image of the Ottomans was to invent a new origin for the Turks. The Turks didn't originate in Central Asia, the English asserted. Turks were of European stock. To be more precise, the Turks descended from the ancient Trojans. The Turks, it was argued, drew their name from the son of Teucer, the son of Greek Telamon and the Trojan princess Hesione. Turkish power was effectively "Europeanized" by legitimizing their rule in Asia and Europe because they had descendants of both sides in the Trojan War. Others went further and claimed Turks were descended from Troy's King Priam's grandson Turcus, thus were related to Hector and his brother Paris who had led Trojan forces. After the war, Turcus headed to Central Asia and became the forefather of the Turks. It was concluded the Turks were Trojans who had converted to Islam.

The above nonsense continued for the next 250 years as Britain became the protector of the Ottoman Empire and then an ally of Turkey. We know how the British saved the Ottoman Empire (1832) when the Egyptian army occupied Konya and was within striking distance of Constantinople. We know how the British saved the Ottoman Empire during the Crimean War in the mid-1850s. We know how at the Congress of Berlin (1878), Britain guaranteed Ottoman survival by helping reverse articles at Treaty of San Stefano. One of Sultan Abdul Hamid II's fans was the dowdy Queen Victoria who even visited her hero in Constantinople. After the First World War, Britain quickly forgot the "recent misunderstanding" and became friendly with Turkey mostly for commercial reasons. Since 1950, they have been NATO allies.

When considering whether to tilt Armenia's foreign policy towards the West, let's not forget Britain's track record. The rest of the West shares that dishonorable record. Let's not forget EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen's despicable recent rush to Azerbaijan to sign a multi-billion energy contract and her description of vile Azerbaijan as a "crucial, reliable and trustworthy partner."

Photo. *Credit: Wellcome Collection* https://wellcomecollection.org/works/bnnxa9nz/items
The Congress of Berlin: Disraeli as a tooth-drawer, assisted by Queen Victoria, operates on Sultan Abdul Hamid II of the Ottoman Empire, surrounded by political figures from France, Germany etc. Coloured lithograph by J.J. van Brederode after Jan Steen, 1878.

Comments

Vrej M – 2023-08-17 21:37:28
"Russia might also recall Armenia's strategic importance to Russia. For these reasons, I'd say criticizing Russia would be of no benefit." ==Armenia hasn't done anything to motivate them except saying "We are christian! You are christian! Will you help me?". If Armenia puts some tough sanctions on Russia, that would change, however, Armenia can't do anything and it is a tiny country with very little value. Azerbaijan is more valuable. In short, Russia will never remember Armenia. He'll go with Khazakistan, Turkmenistan, Mongolia, China, and so on. There is more of a will from the west to help Armenia than there is a will from Russia to help Armenia. Look at France. Italy has invested heavily in upgrading the Medzamor nuclear plant. Italy helped demine Artsakh years ago. Like the article says, the west has been behaving slimely for centuries. They have the power to crush Turkey, but why should they? How does it benefit them? On the other hand, the west places a high importance on morals, on human life, human freedom. They have many organizations that help people in other countries. So, I live in Canada, I am proud to be canadian and I'll stick with the west.

Mesrob – 2023-08-02 08:06:15
There's a difference between the West's and Russia's betrayal of Armenia. The West has been consistent in its betrayals while Russia has occasionally protected Armenia and has been a beneficial presence. Since Russia is going through a volatile period, there is a chance Russia might return to its role as protector of Armenians when the dunderhead Pashinyan is toppled. Russia might also recall Armenia's strategic importance to Russia. For these reasons, I'd say criticizing Russia would be of no benefit.

Puzzled – 2023-08-01 17:07:20
Better to talk about Russian betrayal at this time and the actions necessary to stop the continuation of the Armenian genocide…



Jirair Tutunjian – 2023-07-31 14:13:16

To Puzzled. I am puzzled by your assumption that because we know the West has repeatedly betrayed us, we are not aware of Russia's perfidy. Despite your uninformed and salacious comment, Pashinyan is not "kissing the back" of the Russians. Since he has been elected, he has done everything to antagonize the Russians. Re Britain--the main target of the article--I don't think Britain recognizes the Armenian Genocide. Since you are obviously uninformed about the article's topic, allow me to explain to you that the West betrays indiscriminately. Armenians aren't the only people who have been led down the garden path. In fact, it's a matter of pride for the West to declare real politic, governance and foreign policy sans morals. If Armenians are "Naives R Us," the West is "Machiavelli R Us."



Puzzled – 2023-07-31 03:28:11

It is laughable that any Armenian should blame the West for betrayal. You have the Russian soldiers at your border that has physically blockaded your people and is starving them. You have an incompetent government that continues to kiss the behind of Russia's leadership beginning for help. Then you have the West, Russia's enemy!! And Armenians believe that the West should go save them from self imposed slavery?? So that Armenians can turn around and lay themselves again on the sacrificial platter for the Russians?? Yeah that is worse than naïve, that is delusional!! No one will help those who won't help themselves!!



HAGOP – 2023-07-30 12:57:00

Good and informatica article. Christianity is unlike Islam, it is personal and never meant to be state. It was Konstantine who "used" the popular belief for his personal gains. With respect to Elizabeth I, there are speculations that he was actually male rather than female. I cannot put Christian face on Henry the eight, the cruel king. Elizabeth I ordered the murder of her cousin, Mary, not a Christian queen either. Oliver Cromwell was the cruelest ruler ever in England, his puritan rule was everything but Christian. What about Armenian Christianity? Are we really Christian or nominal Christian? One has to check the manifesto of the political parties, all of them are offshoots of socialism, Marxist ideas, nothing about them is Christian. A casual visit to the church on Sundays is just a reason to socialize, listen theatrical sacred music and get bored by a sermon, which does not have any value. Either Armenians are stupid to think any nation is Christian or live under the same illusion that the west will come and help us. One truth though, we were much better off under the Ottoman rule, because we understood how they functioned. The imported western ideas just gave us false hope and created the rift between the Ottoman Turks and us. What happened, why suddenly we had all the revolutionaries, does it have to do anything with the visit of Theodore Herzl to Sultan Hamid? Sultan Hamid threw Herzl out of his court on the advice of an Armenian advisor. For crying out loud guys, there is no hope from France's Macron nor from American Biden. If we need to stay on that land, we need to get along with all the Neighbours, local good and bad. We should stop listening to charlatan leaders of the west.



Tavit – 2023-07-29 19:39:00

A perfect expose of the rat and roach infested British government.