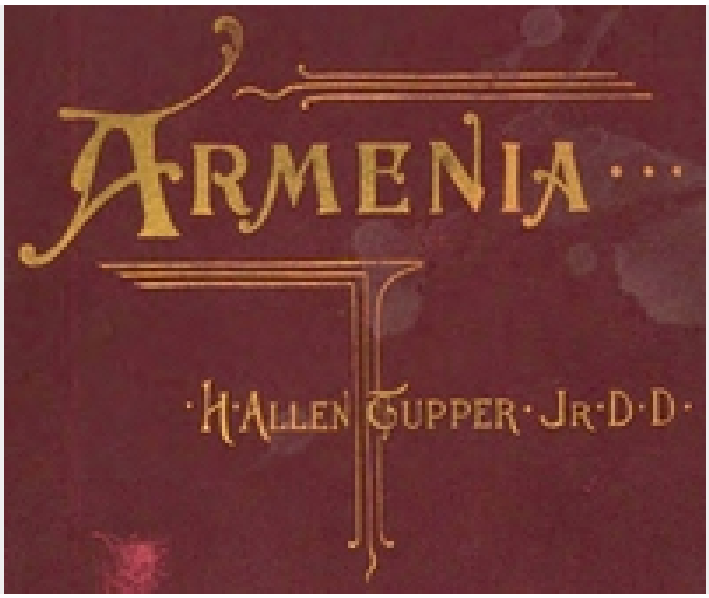
SOME TOLERANCE, SOME JUSTICE

Posted on June 6, 2015 by Keghart



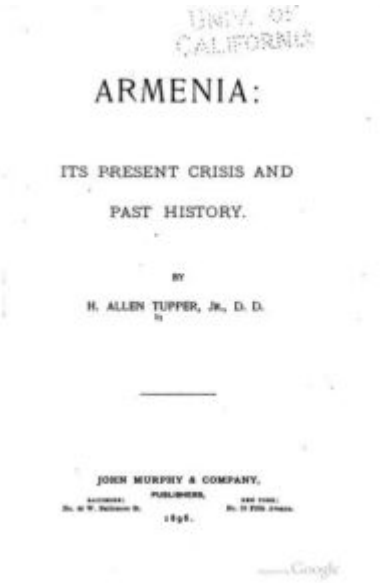
Category: Opinions

Researched by **Jirair Tutunjian**, Toronto, 6 June 2015

The Turkish government's bag of lies about the treatment of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire is deep and variegated: Turkey considered Armenians the "faithful" minority; Turkey allowed self-governance to Armenians; Armenians and Turks lived in harmony for four-hundred years; Armenians were well treated by the Sublime Porte and provincial governors; Armenians lead a comfortable life; the ungrateful Armenians allied with the Russians; heavily-armed Armenians wanted to destroy the empire…

But debating the truth with Ankara and its reprehensible mouthpieces is an exercise in '*déjà vu* all over again', like "Groundhog Day", the popular movie where the days play out exactly as the day before in a time loop. Like the main character of that movie, we go through the same words day after day. Did we not correct supercilious, oleaginous Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu's false narrative yesterday? Did we not expose, a mere 24 hours ago, the soporific fabrications of Justin McCarthy, Gunter Lewy, et al for the nth time? So why are the drooling epigones back again today repeating their yesterday's rancid lies?

Rather than look at the big picture and quote august company as jurist Raphael Lemkin, the International Association of Genocide Scholars, U.S. Ambassador Morgenthau and other unimpeachable authorities, let us take a look at a far more modest—but no less credible--source. It's an account of carnage in an Armenian village.



The below letter was written by an Armenian peasant in Shepik, a village near Kharpert. Written 120 years ago, it demolishes most of Ankara's Big Lies with its detailed yet simple narrative. Consider that the plunder and slayings described in the letter took place 29 years before the Genocide…when the Turkish killers were not as organized as the Young Turks.

The Shepik peasant's unsigned (for obvious reasons) letter was translated into English and published

in American scholar H. Allen Tupper Jr.'s "Armenia…Its Present Crisis and Past History" (New York, 1896). The letter, titled "The Carnage at Shepik", graphically tells how Ottoman Armenians lived and died in the provinces, away from the eyes of Western diplomats in Istanbul.

The Carnage at Shepik

"The Plundering Company that attacked us was led by Sard Checheklee Kours Oghlan, who, with 400 armed followers came to the village and fired upon it until noon. Afterward, some of the leading men of the village went to understand what was their purpose in plundering us. After consultation, a hundred Turkish pounds were paid as a ransom, but they would not go. 'You must give us your watches also,' they said. We gave them up, but still they wouldn't go. 'We are going to take your grain, the oxen and the cattle.' They took them, and were still unsatisfied. 'We are going to hunt through your houses, and take whatever pleases us.' They did, and went off with all the valuable things.

"When day became night, we thought the danger had passed and that we were safe, but in vain. The next morning the Turks from the surrounding villages attacked us and threatened to kill us if we did not leave our houses, so we went outside, and they entered and plundered. For eight days, they burned the houses as they emptied them. Only ten or twelve of the poorer houses were not burned, but the doors and windows were carried off, and even the rafters of some were taken away. After this, they rushed upon the women and the children and took off their shoes and clothing. On the eighth day as they had finished their work, they came to us who were on the banks of the stream. They killed Brother Boghos' son, and Pastor Melcon on the other side of the stream, because they would not change their religion. It became night. Darkness was upon us, but they came with lanterns, and selected forty-five of the young men, saying that the government wanted them. Knowing what would befall them, they asked for an hour's grace. They prayed and sang; they asked forgiveness of each other; they kissed the hands of their parents, and parted with them expectation of never again seeing each other.

"Taking them to a desolated place, half an hour distant, they were taken apart, two by two, and threatened with death if they would not change their religion. They all, with one voice, agreed in saying boldly, 'We will not deny our religion. We are ready to die for our Savior's love.'

"Only five succeeded in making their escape, but the remaining forty became martyrs for the love of Jesus. My son, Samuel, was among the forty-five, but he escaped with four others, and hid in a cave for ten or twelve days. My younger son, twenty-two years old, was killed.

"How heart-rending was the sight! A week before, we were in our homes, comfortable, having made every preparation for the winter, having our friends about us: but like Job, we were deprived of everything, dwelling-house, furniture, beds, food, and clothing. With beds uncovered, with feet bare, little clothing upon us, we passed from rock to rock, from mountain to mountain, with great wailing

and lamentations to find our children: Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they were not.

“After wandering about several days, and remaining hungry, we put aside every fear and went to the city (Arabkir) for help, but in vain. I forgot to say that when the first attack was made, seven young men went to the city to inform the government. They were imprisoned and unable to return to us. A few days later one of them tried to get away, but he was killed by the government.

“Twice, the government sent us grain for bread, but it was only enough to make two and a half loaves for each person (about the amount given to a soldier for a day’s rations), and this was to last us ten or twelve days. The wheat was burnt, and mice had been at it, to which shall they render help?

“All that we have is common property. We have returned to our village, and are crowded into the ten remaining house, there is no bread; there is not even an earthen dish in which to cook anything, if we had it. We have no money, no beds. We sleep on dry boughs of trees. Many of our number became sick, and many as ten have died from cold, hunger and exposure.”



Illustration in H. Allen Tupper Jr.’s Book

To return to the Hollywood reference, there was no Yul Brynner, Steve McQueen, James Coburn, Charles Bronson in Shepik, as in ‘The Magnificent Seven’, to come to the rescue of the Armenians peasants.

Cloying, preening prime minister of Turkey would probably say that what happened in Shepik was the work of Kurdish bandits.. .that the Ottoman Empire was going through difficult times, Turkey was in pain too… these things happen… earlier on the Armenians had attacked an Ottoman regiment with Maxim machine guns, Hotchkiss *mitrailleuse* , 75 mm French cannons…