

WILL WE EVER LEARN?

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By Avedis Kevorkian, Philadelphia, PA. 17 April 2008

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When was this written?

"Only one thing we do realize right now--our responsibility to the Armenians. We must work. . .to let the world know how the Armenians have suffered and what their lot must always be under Turkish rule."

Or, this:

"We see, too. . .how heartless and cynical the diplomats of Europe are. They are the cause, as much as the Turks, of the massacres."

Or, this:

"As far as the Near East goes, the Great Powers are equally guilty. . . . I see blood when I think of what is called 'European diplomacy'--for blood is there, blood shed before our eyes."

And, finally, this:

"Now we know that the only difference between Young and Old Turks is that the Young Turks are more energetic and thorough in their massacring."

They were all written in April 1909 (though published in "The Red Rugs of Tarsus," 1917, by an American woman (Helen Davenport Gibbons) who witnessed the massacres in and around Tarsus and Adana. She was writing home from Mersin on her way out of Turkey, after only a year there. Thus, observing Western hypocrisy and indifference before the Genocide, and publishing after the start of the Genocide, Mrs. Gibbons saw little to change her views. Were she alive today, she still would see nothing to change her views

For well over a year, I have been reading a couple dozen or more Armenian-related books that have been resting unread on my book-shelves. Dating from the earliest, published in 1876 (by James Bryce) to this past February (a study of the Armenian Genocide denial and the on-going Kurdish Genocide), there are many common themes that run through them all--whether by Armenians or non-Armenians; whether diaries, histories, journals; whether fiction (based on fact) or non-fiction--is the deceit, the deception, the hypocrisy, the lying, the mendacity of the Turk, and the willing acceptances of these by the European countries. And, alas, the proof of Kevorkian's Law: "Armenia has no natural friends in this world."

Reading these books, it was easy to understand the brilliant summary of a country's foreign policy by Charles de Gaulle: "Nations

do not have principles; they have interests.'

And those interests are made manifest in the actions--and, many times, the inactions--of those European nations that expressed "concern" about what was happening in the Ottoman Empire, and the mistreatment not only of the Armenians and other Christians but also of all minorities. Possibly no greater truth was uttered than that by the American philosopher, John Dewey, when he said, "Happy the minority which has had no Christian nation to protect it!"

One has to admire how Turkey, especially throughout the nineteenth century (though it received its "education" earlier), learned to play one nation against the other, aligning itself first with one nation and then another, but always "reading" very astutely where the interests of those nations really were. Thus, Turkey was with the French, when the French were dominant; with the English, when the English were dominant; with the Germans, when the Germans were dominant; even with the Russians, when it suited them; and, now, of course, with America.

However, no matter which had been their "ally," the Turks were able to work against that country, as it suited them.

Asked to select the most consistently pernicious "enemy" of the Armenians, one would have to say "Britain." Not necessarily because it was "anti" Armenia so much as it was "pro" Ottoman Turkey--its policies based on protecting the route to India, first over-land, then, after the Suez Canal, the sea route. If any nation--Russia was Armenia's most consistent (but not always) "friend"--showed interest in the beleaguered Christians, the Turk whispered into the ear of the British ambassador, "The real reason that is interested in the is so it can cut your link to India." Of course, when it was another country, the Turks would show the threat to that country's self-interest by the "so-called" friendship of that country to Armenia (or the Christians).

However, let us not pick on Britain, alone. Read--as I did not too long ago--the history of the "Peace" Conference following World War I, and laugh (you will have to, else you will cry) at the machinations of the "Big Four" over the spoils of the Ottoman Empire to fully understand why the world is what it is today, even with the intervening period of World War II.

What is it that this essay is trying to say? It is, simply, that Armenia (whether it is the Yerevan government or the Diaspora speaking in its name) must understand the world as it is, and not as Armenia would like it to be.

Armenia must not misinterpret the anti-Turkish statements by some politicians in Europe as being pro-Armenia. If it wasn't the "Genocide" issue (for some of them) or the "Cyprus" issue (for others), it would be something else. If Turkey acknowledged the Genocide, and left northern Cyprus, these same politicians would find another "cause" to use for its anti-Turkish campaign. But, rest assured, it would not be for the love of Armenia!

Certainly, Armenia should take advantage of these "anti" Turkish politicians, but it should not place its entire hope in them. They are talking interests, not principles.

Do I have any advice? In a manner of speaking, I do: "Do not criticize the Turks, learn from them."

They did not speak to those countries--just as they do not now speak (dictate?) to America--about what is good for Turkey but what is good for those countries. A salesman does not sell by saying, "Please buy this suit, so that I can get the commission." He says, "You must buy this suit because you look handsome in it."

Why should any nation help Armenia because it was the first Christian nation or the mass victim of the 20th century's first state-planned and state-executed genocide? So what?

Armenia--and that includes its vocal Diaspora--must learn to offer the nations of the world one or more benefits to them to switch their loyalties from Turkey to Armenia. Or, at least, to look with favor on matters-Armenian.

Until recently, one of the appeals could have been that Armenia was the only relatively stable country in the area, and, therefore, a reliable partner for Western countries.

No more, as the kleptocrats in power managed again to keep out the wannabe kleptocrats who felt that it was their turn at the money trough. And the losers decided to cry about it in public.

In addition to learning from the Turks how to argue their cause, the Armenians can also learn from the Cypriots how to conduct themselves after an election. About the same time that the Armenians were disgracing themselves, the Republic of Cyprus held its presidential elections. In the first round, the incumbent president came in third, by a close margin, and was eliminated from the second round.

There were no shouts of "foul," "fraud," "re-run." The losers, including the incumbent president, accepted the fact and the choice of the voters and the Cypriot government continues as any civilized country's after an election.

But, of course, the Armenians being superior to all others know everything and, therefore, are not capable of learning from others.

