

THE SECOND OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

by

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What is Armenia?

Where is Armenia?

Who are the Armenians?

Geographically, Armenia began as a region in southwestern Asia and Asia-Minor, spreading across one-third of what is now Turkey, from the Black Sea to the north, to the Caspian Sea to the East, separated from Russia by the Caucasus Mountains and extending to Cilicia and the Mediterranean to the south.

The Armenia of old stretched between the high plains of Anatolia and Iran- a beautiful highland country in the center of which was Mount Ararat. This 16,000 ft. mountain where Noah and the Ark was said to have landed was considered to be the heart of Armenia. Although this mountain is now in Turkey, its majesty can be seen and appreciated in Armenia, and even as far away as its capital, Yerevan, its snow-capped peak can be seen. Because of its beauty and that it was in the center of ancient Armenia, the Armenian people still consider this mountain to be their own, *their* mountain.

An Indo-European people, including the Hittites, joined with the Hayasas and eventually, the area became called Hayastan, now the modern Armenian name for Armenia. The people of that time were recognized by their round heads and prominent noses, and later in evolution, brown eyes, black hair, and dark complexion-Armenoid features-they were known for their intelligence and nobility. They proved to be good bankers, merchants and businessmen with a crafty acumen. (It is said that an Armenian can buy from a Jew and sell to a Scotchman and still make a profit!) Now they may be known by their names ending in -ian or -yan.

In the conquest of the Hittite Empire, the Urartu joined the separatist group Hayasa or Armenians, and with their later subjugation, this group became called the Armenians. One cannot help but see the multivariate forces influencing the Armenians.

In the 2nd century B.C. Artaxes, the prefect of Armenia, proclaimed complete independence and became the King of Armenia. Rome, in 66 B.C., recognized Armenia as an independent kingdom but part of a Roman State, stretching from the Caspian Sea in the east to the Mediterranean Sea to the west. Armenia extended its rule over parts of the Caucasus, eastern Turkey, Syria, and Lebanon, and was one of the most powerful states in the Roman east.

The introduction of Christianity in Armenia dates from the 1st century when it was preached by the Apostles St. Bartholomew and St. Jude. In the year 301 A.D. St. Gregory the Illuminator converted the people from Zoroastrianism to Christianity, and acted to heal the King, Tiridites III, of an incurable disease, whereupon, King Tiridites declared that Armenia would be a Christian nation, the first in the world to adopt Christianity as its *national religion*. Today the religion is that predominated by the Armenian Apostolic Church, an independent branch of the Eastern Orthodox Church, though there are Armenian Catholics and Protestants in smaller numbers.

Probably the most intimately associated with Armenia is Turkey. The Turks are an Asiatic peoples related to the Tartars, mixed with the early inhabitants of Asia Minor and with Balkan and Mediterranean peoples. The Seljuk Turks, a Moslem people, were the first to invade Asia Minor from the east, and in 1070 they destroyed the Byzantines. The Emperor Constantine asked for help from the western European nations, and they responded with the first Crusades.

In the late 1200's a leader by the name of Osman or Othman founded a great empire with a great following. They became called the Osmanli or Ottomans. The Ottomans identified themselves as Sunni Muslims, never as Turks. In 1326 Osman's son took over and invaded Europe, and eventually a great leader, Suleiman, spread the Ottoman rule as far as Greece to the west and Hungary to the north, eventually being halted before invading Vienna. Eventually in the 19th century the name "Turk" a formerly derogatory term, took on a more positive connotation.

In the years to follow, however, increasing hostilities from the conquered republics resulted in greater and greater losses. And by the 1800's Turkey was called "the Sick Man of Europe." Russia kept pressing toward the Mediterranean, and Greece declared its independence. From 1854 to 1856 France and Britain, in the Crimean War fought with the Ottomans to defeat Russia, but later Russia in the Russo-Turkish War acquired the Armenian territory. Then, afterwards, the other European powers, through diplomatic action, meeting at the Congress of Berlin, forced Russia to give up a large part of its gains.

After many centuries of Ottoman occupation, the centers of high concentration of Armenians lost their geographic continuity, because over years, pockets of Kurds and Turks infiltrated into traditionally Armenian land. Despite the strong presence of Muslims, the Armenians continued to be the "other" majority group; they migrated into Western Armenia well into the 19th century. Many Armenians settled into the larger cities to the west, Istanbul or Izmir. The Sultan promoted migration of Turks and Kurds within the borders to reduce the native populations of Armenians in historic Armenia and to reduce the Greek majority of western Anatolia by adding non-Greeks.

Succeeding the throne, following the deposition of his brother, Abdul Hamid II came to power from 1876-1909 and was the last Sultan to rule with absolute power. When he came to power, the Empire was about to collapse. Everyone appreciated his efforts apart from the

intellectuals, being under the protection of the European countries. By these people he was ceaselessly slandered.

In accordance with the Muslim system, Armenians as Christians, were guaranteed limited freedoms (such as the right to worship) but were treated as second class citizens. Christians and Jews were not considered as equals to Muslims. Testimony against Muslims by Christians and Jews was inadmissible in court. They were forbidden to carry weapons or to ride atop a horse. Their houses could not overlook those of Muslims. Violations would result in punishments ranging from fines to execution.

Like the Greek Orthodox and the Jewish minorities of the Ottoman Empire, the Armenians gathered in millets led by the Patriarch of Constantinople. A millet being a colony or a district or a grouping of Armenians within a town or city, or in some cases an entire village consisting solely of Armenians. Under Ottoman rule Armenians were granted considerable autonomy within their own enclaves and lived in harmony with other groups in the empire. However, as Christians in a strict Muslim social system, Armenians faced pervasive discrimination. Minority groups throughout the Ottoman Empire were abused and persecuted, and although the government promised reforms, they were never carried out. They were taxed heavily and had no recourse to courts. Sultan Abdul Hamid II blamed the Armenians for their aid to the Russians, conspiring with the pro-Christian Tsarist enemy to upset the Ottoman campaign in the east in the Russo-Turk War, and when they pushed for more rights and staged protests, Sultan Hamid, in response, using local Moslems, in most cases Kurds, organized state sponsored massacres and pogroms between 1894 and 1896 annihilating small towns or millets of Armenians.

These massacres became known as the Hamidian Massacres giving Sultan Hamid II infamy as the "Red Sultan", or the "Bloody Sultan", or the "Great Assassin".

The government promised reforms failed to materialize. The sultan annulled the constitution, resulting in dissent among the younger Turkish citizenry, and soon, a coalition of various groups, favoring reform of the administration, came together. In 1889 a movement began, first among military students, then discontented army officers. Secret societies were formed and driven underground. All forms of political dissent were prosecuted. These *Ittihadists*, as they were called, formed the Committee of Unions and Progress (CUP), and were more widely recognized as the "Young Turks" and became a revolutionary movement. Some Armenians were included in the movement as well. Armenian revolutionary groups, the Hunchaks, (the Marxists) and the Dashnaks, (the Socialists), formed the Armenian Revolutionary Federation. The ARF, founded in 1890 advocated socialism and was one of the staunchest of parties supporting Armenian nationalism. They actively aimed to unify small groups of Armenians in the empire advocating reform and defending Armenian villages from massacres that were widespread in some Armenian populated areas of the empire. They formed guerilla and armed resistance groups. They had the same goals as the Young Turks, and in joining the Committee of Unions and Progress, hoped that if the Young Turks came to power, they would grant autonomy to the

Armenians.

Materialism and Positivism were the Young Turks' theme. Their aim was the transformation of society into one in which religion played no consequential role. Science was to replace religion. Eventually, the Young Turks created a new governing elite, controlling the Ottoman civil and military administration, and in a *coup d'etat*, the Sultan was deposed in 1908, hailed by most Ottoman citizens who welcomed the return to constitutional rule. Armenians, Greeks, and Bulgarians rejoiced in his dethronement.

The next year, a "*contre-coup*" took place, consisting of Ottoman military elements and theological students. Fighting erupted and spilled over into pogroms-blaming the Armenians for encouraging the Young Turk's "*coup d'etat*".

The Armenian population of Adana Province was the richest and most prosperous in the region, and they had openly supported the coup against the Sultan. They perceived this as a godsend when he was deposed of power. The next year, however, with the *contre-coup* the loyalists backed the Sultan and he regained his dictatorial powers. Blaming the Armenians, perceiving them as "separatists" and "European-controlled", and siding with the Young Turks, they attacked the Armenian quarter of Adana resulting in thousands of Armenians killed.

With the *contre-coup* Ottoman military elements, joined by Islamic theological students aimed to return control of the country to the Sultan and the rule of Islamic law. Riots and fighting broke out between these reactionary forces. The Ittihadists-members of the Committee of Unions and Progress(the Young Turks), however, were able to put down the uprising, and in 1913 three of the Young Turks emerged as most powerful and became known as the Dictatorial Triumvirate:

Mehmet Talaat Pasha-Minister of the Interior

Ismail Enver Pasha-Minister of War

Ahmed Djemal Pasha-Minister of the Navy

(*PASHA: A title placed after the name of a high official in countries under Turkish rule.*)

After the *coup* of 1913 the three became the *de facto* rulers of the Ottoman Empire until its dissolution after World War I. It was undeniable that most key decisions passed through them. The three Pashas were the principal players in the Ottoman-German Alliance, and, in 1914, the Ottoman's entry into World War I on the side of the Central Powers: Germany, Austria and Bulgaria.

Enver Pasha, Minister of War, seeking to regain territories lost to Russia during the Russo-Turkish War confronted Russia but was soundly defeated. He blamed the Armenians living in the region actually siding with Russia. The Ittihadists declared a Turkish boycott of Armenian businesses, purportedly, as a punishment. In February 1915 Enver Pasha demobilized and disarmed Armenian conscripts in the Ottoman Army and assigned them instead to *labor battallions* out of fear that they would collaborate with the Russians.

Two thousand leading Armenians were pointed out to the police of Constantinople by names, biographies, and speeches they had made about reform, etc. On the night of April 24, 1915, a Sunday, under orders of Talaat Pasha, the Ottomans rounded up 250 Armenian intellectuals and community leaders in Constantinople-writers, poets, politicians, lawyers, educators, philanthropists- and arrested them on the pretext they were fostering rebellion. This date became known as "Red Sunday". They were transported from the capitol and scattered into the interior of Ottoman territory, imprisoned, and eventually killed. Objections from the Armenian Prefect in Constantinople were ignored. The only ambassador to help in efforts to release these deportees was the U.S. Ambassador Henry Morgenthau Sr.. But his efforts were ignored.

Claiming the Armenian resistance and riots were a threat to national security, the "Tecer Law" was passed one month later. It provided for the relocation of Armenian settlements because of "war conditions" and emergency "political" requirements. Evacuations and massacres followed. The Armenians were given a few days, or in some instances, a few hours to leave their homes. Men were separated from women and killed. Women were often raped. Some were sent to concentration camps.

The "Temporary Law of Expropriation and Confiscation" stated that all property including land, livestock, and homes belonging to Armenians were to be confiscated. These properties were transferred and were given to the Muslim residents, and money made from the sale of seized properties was transferred and secured in banks in Berlin.

A document from Talaat Pasha, the Minister of the Interior, stated his intention to exterminate all Armenians and outlined the extermination plan, offering a guaranty of immunity for officials, and calling for tighter censorship. One day came the following order: "Although the extermination of all Armenians had been decided upon earlier than this, circumstances did not allow us to carry out this sacred intention. Now that all obstacles have been removed, it consequently is recommended that you should not be moved by feelings of pity on seeing their miserable plight, but put an end to them all. Try with all your might to obliterate the name Armenia from Turkey. The life and honor of the Armenians should be destroyed. They no longer have the right to live."

With the implementation of the Tehcir Law, the confiscation of Armenian property and slaughter of Armenians, and mass starvation outraged much of the western world. The New York Times reported almost daily the mass murders of the Armenian people recognizing it as "systemic", "authorized", and "organized" by the government. Later, Theodore Roosevelt characterized this as the greatest crime of the war.

Armenians were marched out to the Syrian desert without facilities or supplies. The New York Times reported "roads and the Euphrates river were strewn with corpses of exiles. It is a plan to exterminate the Armenian people."

Naturally, the deaths from starvation and sickness were very high. No shelter was offered against the cold nights nor the intense heat of the scorching desert. No food or water were offered. Some temporary relief was obtained by those able to pay off the officials. Twenty-five concentration camps were located near the Iraqi and Syrian borders. The shortest method of disposing of women and children concentrated in the various camps was to burn them. They were gathered *en masse* or shut up in churches, burned and reduced to ashes. Witnesses were horrified but said nothing. The stench filled the air for many days. Some children were given morphine injections and some were injected with blood from typhus victims; some were loaded onto boats, driven out to sea and thrown overboard. German engineers and laborers involved in the building of the Berlin to Baghdad railroad witnessed Armenians being crammed into cattle cars and shipped along the railway.

Thousands of Turkish prisoners serving in prisons for various crimes were freed so that they might “escort” the Armenian deportees. They raped and pillaged and became called the “butchers of the human species”.

A proposal was made to Armenian military doctors that they become Moslem. Almost all refuse and at once are killed. Armenian orphans were given Turkish names and sent to orphanages to be “Turkified” .

Eye witnesses from the United States and the Ottoman Empire’s own allies documented numerous acts of state sponsored massacres. Offers to intervene by many foreign officials including Pope Benedict XV were turned away by the Ottoman officials who claimed they were merely retaliating against a pro-Russian insurrection.

Henry Morgenthau, Sr., under President Woodrow Wilson, serving as Ambassador to the Ottoman Empire from 1913 to 1916, received reports from various American consuls throughout the empire about the mass deportations and killings they were witnessing. He wrote about the killings: “When Turkish authorities gave orders for the deportations they were merely giving a death warrant to a whole race; they understood this well, and in their conversations with me, they made no particular attempt to conceal the fact...“. He sent the following telegram July 15, 1915:

“Deportations and excesses against peaceful Armenians is increasing, and from harrowing reports from eyewitnesses, it appears that a campaign of race extermination is in progress as a pretext of reprisal against rebellion.

“Protests as well as threats are unraveling and probably incite the Ottoman government to more drastic measures as they are determined to disdain responsibility for their absolute disregard of capitulations, and I believe nothing short of actual force, which the United States are not in a position to exert, would adequately meet the situation-----.”

When he raised the issue with Talaat Pasha and Enver Pasha, they “justified” these actions as necessary to the conduct of the war, suggesting the complicity of the Armenians with the Russian

forces, justifying the persecution of all ethnic Armenians.

Theodore Roosevelt, William Jennings Bryan, Rabbi Stephan Wise, Alice Stone Blackwell and others spoke against the killings. British politician Viscount Bryce and historian Arnold J. Toynbee compiled statements from survivors and eyewitnesses attesting to the systematized massacre of innocent Armenians in the 1916 published book *The Treatment of the Armenians by the Ottoman empire 1915-1916*. Winston Churchill described the massacres as an “administrative holocaust” and noted the clearance of race from Asia Minor was as complete as an act could be. He wrote, “There is no reason to doubt that this crime was planned and executed for political reasons. The opportunity presented itself for clearing Turkish soil of a Christian race opposed to all Turkish ambition.”

During 1915, the prosecutions were extended to include all Christians in the Ottoman Empire. The annihilation of Greeks was also an issue. Many were forcefully converted to Islam. Enver declared he wanted to solve the Greek problem the same way he solved the Armenian problem. Assyrians were included as well, along with the Armenians and Greeks. 500,000-750,000 fell victims to deportation, starvation, death marches, and the concentration camps.

Estimates of the Armenian dead varied:

The modern American estimate is 1,500,000

The Turkish government declined offers of aid to Armenian survivors., however, in October, 1916 President Woodrow Wilson proclaimed “Armenian Relief Days”. The Armenian Near East Relief Committee donated over \$110 million dollars to the Armenians. American children were regularly reminded to clean their plates while eating and to “remember the starving Armenians”.

Early in 1918, as the World War I continued, Damascus, then Beirut, then Aleppo were occupied by Allied Forces of the British and French. And with their arrival, and with the participation of the Armenian Legion-volunteers comprised of freed Armenians-125,000 deported Armenians were rescued from the desert. With this large-scale offensive, the Ittihad cabinet of Talaat, Enver, and Djamel prepared to flee the country.

On October 30, 1918 an armistice was signed between Turkey and the Allies. Talaat, Enver, and Djamel fled the country in a German freighter.

On November 11, 1918 the Armistice was declared between the Allies and the Central Powers. Eight months later, June 1919, the *Treaty of Versailles* was signed between the Allies and Germany.

In January 1920 the Allies recognized the independence of Armenia, and in April, 1920 the United States officially recognized the *Independent Republic of Armenia*. In August 1920 the

Treaty of Sevres between the Allies and the Ottoman Empire resulted in the partitioning of Turkey. A large area of northern Anatolia, bordering on the Black Sea remained to Turkey. Armenia remained far to the east, bordering on Russia.

Armenia declared war at the Turkish-Armenian border attempting to reclaim some of its lost territories. Seeking help from Russia, Armenia had to accept Soviet communist rule, and became the *Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic*.

Early the next year a Court Martial was convened in Constantinople to address war crimes. Mehmet Talaat, Ismail Enver, and Ahmed Djemal were tried *in absentia* and accused of war crimes by the Turkish Courts Martial and condemned to death.

The deeds of the “Triumvirate” were not forgotten by members of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation. Their “Operation Nemeses” plan was underway. Nemeses (after the Greek Goddess of Retribution) ARF’s code name to assassinate the Turkish planners of the massacres and deportations. A “black list” was created and Talaat was distinguished Number One. He was known to be residing in Berlin. The Nemesis mission was entrusted to Soghomon Telirian. He was told “Blow up the skull of the number one nation-murderer. And you don’t try to flee. You stand there with your foot on the corpse and surrender to the police who will come and handcuff you.” It was hoped that the trial would turn into a political trial of those responsible for the Armenian genocide.

Telirian awaited his prey on the street of a Berlin community. He drew his pistol and killed Talaat as planned, in front of civilian witnesses and was arrested by the German authorities and put on trial. He was found not guilty by reason of insanity.

Enver was killed in Tajikistan, while fighting to create a Pan-Turkish nation in central Asia. He was killed during an attack by a Red Army cavalry attachment. Ironically, the attachment was commanded by an Armenian.

Djamal was assassinated in Tbilisi, Georgia by an ARF Nemeses member.

After World War I Turkey was partitioned to balance the occupation of southern Anatolia and Cilicia by the Italians; the Greeks, then, were given the western region which included Smyrna. In 1920 the *Treaty of Lausanne* annulled the *Treaty of Sevres* and eliminated the partitioning of Turkey resulting in the establishment of a Turkish National Movement and the Grand National Assembly of Turkey, an alliance of Turkish revolutionaries during the partitioning. Reclaiming sovereignty, the Republic of Turkey was established. The Ottoman Sultanate was abolished and Turkey became a democratic constitutional republic, led by Mustafa Kemal Ataturk. But by 1921, the Ottomans-revolutionaries-from the unoccupied region of Anatolia were not as yet placated. Anarchy spread to the Greek-occupied seaport town, Smyrna, on Turkey’s west coast. They entered and pillaged Armenian and Greek homes, stores, and banks. Thousands were killed.

The city was set afire. Within 24 hours 50,000 homes, churches, schools and consulates were destroyed. The town continued to burn for four days. To escape the raging fires, thousands amassed on the quay seeking rescue. Some were fortunate enough to be taken onto boats; many threw themselves off the docks into the water to escape the flames and were drowned.

The willful and purposeful slaughter of the Armenians and other Christians by the Turks, many would agree was a genocide. The legal definition of *genocide* is found in the 1948 United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide.

Genocide is defined as the deliberate and systematic destruction in whole or in part of an ethnic, racial, religious, or national group.

The term *genocide* was first coined by Rafal Lemkin-a Polish-Jewish legal scholar in 1944, referring to the massacres of the Armenians and the Assyrians and later, the Jews, after his emigration to the United States. Lemkin first coined the term at the prosecution of the perpetrators of the Holocaust at the Nurenberg Trial, and he presented the idea of genocide to the United nations in 1948. It became law in 1951. By 1988 all permanent members of the Security Council-United States, France, China, England and Russia had ratified it. Finally, the International Law of the Crime of Genocide began to be enforced.

Of the genocides of this century, the Namibian Genocide was the first genocide of the 20th century. It occurred in German Southwestern Africa (modern day Namibia). The Herero rose up in rebellion against German colonial rule in January 1904. In August the Germans defeated them and drove them into the desert and poisoned their wells. 50-70% died and 50% of the Nama population as well. It was long forgotten, but in 1984 the U.N. recognized the crime as *genocide*. The German government apologized for the crime in 2004, 100 years after the crime.

The Armenian Genocide of 1915 was the *second* of the 20th century.

Determining which historical events constitute genocide is not a clear cut matter. In nearly every case where accusations of genocide have circulated, partisans of various sides have fiercely disputed the interpretation and details of the event, often to the point of promoting wildly different versions of the facts. Accusations are often not taken lightly and almost always will be controversial.

The Turkish response to the accusations on the Armenian Genocide is that the deaths of Armenians during “relocations” and “deportations” cannot be deemed as genocide since the deaths were not deliberate nor government orchestrated. They were justified, they say, because the Armenians posed a Russian sympathy threat. Also starvation was a cause of many deaths. Despite valid documents supported by reports from their previous allies-German-Austrian officials- the representatives of the Turkish State declare these documents to be at best “Armenian fiction or forgeries.”

The web-site of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey currently features a section, for example, entitled "Online Documents About the Atrocities Inflicted upon Turks by the Armenians"

Turkey has as yet never admitted to the genocide. They seek to defend the honor of their fathers against this "lie." "Would you admit to the crimes attributed to your grandfathers if they never happened?" Turkish law states that a person who publicly insults "Turkishness", or the Republic of Turkey shall be punished by imprisonment.

The U.S. Senate proposal to recognize the Armenian Genocide stoked the ire of Turkey. Turkey responded by blocking U.S. Naval visits to Turkey and by suspending U.S. training facilities in Turkey.

There seems to be little doubt that this assassination of the Armenians constitutes genocide. Many Armenian diaspora communities around the world have pushed for its formal recognition. Twenty-three countries and forty states have adopted resolutions acknowledging the Armenian Genocide as a bona fide historical event. The United States has not as yet acknowledged it, nor has the state of Indiana.

The Elie Wiesel* Foundation for Humanities produced a letter signed by 53 Nobel Laureates reaffirming the genocide scholars' conclusion that the 1915 killings of Armenians constituted Genocide.

*Elie Wiesel, Jewish writer, Holocaust survivor, and Nobel Laureate

The thought of the Armenian genocide was imbedded in the mind of Adolph Hitler on August 22, 1939 when he addressed his military commanders at Obersalzberg one week before invading Poland. He speaks of his orders to "kill without pity or mercy all men, women, and children of the Polish race or language." He concludes his remarks by saying, "Who still talks nowadays of the extermination of the Armenians?"**

**It is commonly thought that statement was attributed to Hitler's answer for the "The Final Solution."

No, the Armenian genocide will not be forgotten nor will the Armenians rest until Turkey admits to the genocide and asks for forgiveness. In addition, the Armenian diaspora in the United States would ask that the U.S. government conclude that the term Genocide is appropriate for the mass murder of Armenians before, during and after World War I and so state this to Turkey.

Should the U.S. pass a resolution recognizing the Armenian Genocide and offend Turkey? A Turkish general stated that our military ties would never be the same again.

Although President George W. Bush while running for office in the year 2000 pledged that if elected president, he would ensure that our nation would properly recognize the genocide of the Armenian people, almost immediately after taking office he abandoned his campaign pledge. Both President Bill Clinton and President George W. Bush agreed that the resolution would harm the “indispensable” U.S. -Turkish relationship. This is especially true since the Iraqi War. Consider that in 2007 70% of U.S. cargo passed through Turkey en route to Iraq. Also, 30% of fuel used by the U.S. military came from there.

But are we being held hostage?

There are reasons why Turkey should accede:

1)The facts cannot be denied. It was a genocide. Twenty-three other countries around the world and numerous scholars agree.

2)Time is merely going to increase the size of the thorn in the side of this “valuable” relationship.

3)America does have some leverage over Turkey. U.S. brought Turkey into NATO, and it backs its membership into the European Union.

4)Turkey opposed the Iraq War, a snub against the U.S.

America is still considered an eminent leader of the free world. Should we fear recognizing the purposeful massacre of 1,500,000 Armenians as a genocide when the rest of the world knows that it is? Should we fear offending Turkey? Where is our honesty and our integrity as a nation?

As a Senator, Barack Obama voiced strong support for passage of an Armenian Genocide resolution-U.S. House and Senate Resolution 106. It did not pass. And on January 28, 2009, President Obama, after his inauguration, pledged to recognize the Armenian Genocide. On March 17 of this year, the U.S. House of Representatives introduced House Resolution 252. It awaits adoption by the House Foreign Affairs Committee.

Today, April 6, 2009, Tom Raum, a writer for the Associated Press, reported from Ankara, Turkey: “At a news conference earlier today, with Turkish President Abdullah Gul, President Barack Obama dealt gingerly with the issue of the alleged genocide committed by the Turks against the Armenians during world War I. He urged Turks and Armenians to continue a process that ‘works through the past that is honest, open and constructive’”. Obama said he stood by his 2008 assertion that Ottoman Turks had carried out widespread killings of Armenians in the 20th century, but he stopped short of using the term “genocide.” (In his 2008 campaign Obama had said “the Armenian genocide is not an allegation, but rather, a widely documented fact, supported by an overwhelming body of evidence”.)

He supports the full normalization of relations between Turkey and Armenia. President Gul stated “historians not politicians should decide how to label these events”.

A coming date: April 24 will be the Armenian Genocide Remembrance Day of 1915.

Will resolution 252 come to pass? Stay tuned.

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Addendum: What of the Armenia of today? It is now the Republic of Armenia, having gained its independence from Soviet Russia in 1991. It is situated between Turkey to the west, Georgia and Russia to the north, Azerbaijan to the east and Iraq to the south. Its separation from Russia left it devastatingly poor though an independent democracy. But it is slowly building in strength and well being.

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