

Swedish Archives Confirm: It Was A Genocide!

A recently conducted study at the Uppsala University has revealed highly interesting information in the Swedish Archives, which once again confirm the researchers' view of the events in the Ottoman Turkey during the First World War: the Christian minorities, the Armenians in particular, were subjected to genocide.

The massacres in Ottoman Turkey during the First World War claimed the lives of approximately 1.5 million out of a world population of four million Armenians, while over 250,000 Assyrians/Chaldeans and equal number of Pontic Greeks. In 1923, for the first time in over 2,500 years, Armenians no longer lived on 85 % of their fatherland. Thus, the Armenian genocide was, in a sense, a successful genocide, acquiring the perpetrators an Armenia without Armenians.

The conducted survey covers the period between 1915 and 1923 and includes, among others, reports which the Swedish Ambassador, Cosswa Anckarsvärd, and the Swedish Military Attaché, Einar af Wirsén, both stationed in Constantinople, sent to the Foreign Department (found in the National Archive) and the General Staff Headquarters (found in the War Archive) in Stockholm, respectively. In total, about eighty documents were found with direct relevance to the so-called Armenian Question, of which some are over-explicit in their message: the Turkish Government conducted a systematic extermination of the Armenian Nation.

On July 6, 1915, Ambassador Anckarsvärd, writing to the Swedish Foreign Minister, Knut Wallenberg, concludes: "Mr. Minister, The persecutions of the Armenians have reached hair-raising proportions and all points to the fact that the Young Turks want to seize the opportunity, since due to different reasons there are no effective external pressure to be feared, to once and for all put an end to the Armenian question. The means for this are quite simple and consist of the extermination [utrotandet] of the Armenian nation [emphasis added]." Anckarsvärd's reports until 1920 persisted in the same insight. At several occasions, the Ambassador points out that "It is obvious that the Turks are taking the opportunity to, now during the war, annihilate [utplåna] the Armenian nation [emphasis added] so that when the peace comes no Armenian question longer exists." In a later report (1917) he underlines that the massacres are not clashes between the Muslim and the Armenian populations, but "that the persecutions of Armenians have been done at the instigation of the Turkish Government [emphasis added]..." As an explanation to the prevailing famine in Turkey during 1917, the Embassy Envoy Alhgren mentions the shortage of workers, which is claimed partly to be a result of "the extermination of the Armenian race [utrotandet af den armeniska rasen] [emphasis added]". Major Wirsén's reports to the General Staff concur with Anckarsvärd's analysis. In 1942

Wirsén published his memoirs, entitled *Minnen från fred och krig* ("Memories from Peace and War"), reflecting upon his time as Swedish Military Attaché in the Balkans and Turkey. In a chapter entitled *Mordet på en nation* ("The Murder of a Nation"), Wirsén renders his observations of the Armenian massacres: "Officially, these [deportations] had the goal to move the entire Armenian population to the steppe regions of Northern Mesopotamia and Syria, but in reality they aimed to exterminate [utrota] the Armenians [emphasis added], whereby the pure Turkish element in Asia Minor would achieve a dominating position." In the conclusion of this chapter he recalls his conversation with the Turkish Grand Vizier Talaat Pasha and notes: "The annihilation of the Armenian nation [emphasis added] in Asia Minor must revolt all human feelings. The way the Armenian problem was solved was hair-raising. I still can see in front of me Talaat's cynical expression, when he emphasized that the Armenian Question was solved."

The mentioned quotations are a fraction of the information presented in the study. In addition to the mentioned archives of the Foreign Ministry and the General Staff, the reports from the Swedish missionaries and the Swedish newspapers were also included in the study and concur with the same view. The surveyed documents are mainly in regard to the Armenian Question, but the data bed indicates that other Christian groups, such as Greeks and Syriacs, were affected by the same fate.

The study clearly emphasises the concept of "bystander". While the word itself implies that the bystanders do not participate in the genocide, some contend that they are far from just a neutral viewer to the tragedy, but passive participators in the annihilation. The British statesman and political thinker Edmund Burke's statement captures the essence of the bystanders to genocide: "the only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing." The documents clearly indicate that the Swedish Government was well informed about the state-orchestrated extermination of the Armenians. They also disclose that the Government, fully in accordance with the policy of a small state, consciously chose not to intervene in the matter, neither during the massacres nor after when the League of Nations suggested Sweden as a mandate power in Armenia. While resorting to isolationism during the period of the implementation of the genocide, Sweden followed the general stream, in particular that of the Major Power's, during the post-war period when the question of securing the future of the Armenian Nation was discussed. Sweden, as all other states, chose to secure its national interests rather than standing out from the rest by advocating Armenia's right and the question of punishing the perpetrators of the Armenian genocide. The present-day Swedish Government does not seem to be willing to become involved in the question either. Just last fall, the

On Eve Of Genocide Anniversary, It Is Time For Congress To Act

By Rep. Ed Royce

It is far past time when the United States Congress should go on record officially recognizing the Armenian Genocide. As a State Senator, with the help of Governor George Deukmejian, I authored the first resolution recognizing the Armenian genocide, which passed the California Legislature. In Congress, George Radanovich, Jim Rogan and myself, along with bipartisan support, were able to successfully pass the first Armenian Genocide Resolution through the foreign affairs committee. Later, Adam Schiff, with the support of myself and others, was able to do the same. But, regardless of whether the President was Bill Clinton or George Bush, and whether the Speaker was Dennis Hastert or Nancy Pelosi, the impact of the Government of Turkey's protests has had the same effect. The Genocide Resolution, which we have passed through the Foreign Affairs Committee, has consistently been checkmated by the Government of Turkey. The reason the Government of Turkey can't be allowed to halt passage of this resolution is because of the gravity of the subject of genocide.

On April 24, 1915, the Ottoman Empire set out on a campaign to exterminate the Armenian people. Between 1915 and 1923, the numbers were horrific. One and a half million Armenians were murdered and 500,000 deported from their homelands. At the end of these eight years, the Armenian population of Anatolia and Western Armenia was virtually eliminated, becoming one of the 20th Century's darkest chapters.

While acknowledging the role played by the Ottoman Empire in killing Armenians, some have laid doubt to the claim of genocide, citing the subsequent deportation of the survivors as merely a movement of a people from one land to another. Henry Morgenthau, the U.S. Ambassador to the Ottoman Empire from 1913-1916, saw it much differently. In his memoirs, Morgenthau recalls that the Turks, "never had the slightest idea of reestablishing the Armenians in (a) new country" knowing that "the great majority of those would...either die of thirst and starvation, or be murdered by the wild Mohammedan desert tribes."

I recall Morgenthau's words here because he saw first hand the atrocities wrought on the Armenians, and he had been told by Turks that they un-

ambiguously: Armenians were subjected to genocide.

Foreign Minister Carl Bildt, during an interpellation in the Swedish Parliament, refrained from officially recognizing the 1915 genocide, partly by referring to "the need of additional research about what really transpired in the Ottoman Empire." The surveyed documents should at least quench that need; the official reports from the Swedish Ambassador and the Swedish Military Attaché in Constantinople are



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derstood quite well that they had handed down a death sentence to the Armenian people. The Turks not only knew of what they were doing, but spoke quite freely of it. Eighty years later, however, many are still unwilling to recognize the killing for what it was: genocide.

The U.S. has long been a global leader in promoting human rights around the world. On the issue of the Armenian genocide, however, we lag behind. The French, Swiss, Swedish, Germans, and even the Russian governments recognize the Armenian genocide properly. As a global leader in human rights, it is imperative for the U.S. to stand on principle and recognize the annihilation of the Armenians.

However, it is no less important today to recognize the Armenian genocide for what it is. The deafening silence that came in its wake set the stage for a century that saw genocides occur in Europe, Africa, and Asia. While the Armenian genocide was the first of the 20th century, the blind eye cast to the slaughter of Armenians was a point used by Hitler who asked his joint chiefs of staff, "Who...speaks today of the [their] annihilation?"

To the critics who say that we should not dwell on history, I say it's much harder to get tomorrow right if we get yesterday wrong. The world's strength to oppose killing today is made greater by accountability, for actions present, but also past. It's weakened by denial of accountability of past acts. Not recognizing the Armenian genocide, as such, does just that.

Rep. Ed Royce is a Republican from California. He is the Ranking Member of the Terrorism, Nonproliferation, and Terrorism Subcommittee and is a senior member of the Armenia Caucus.

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The study in its whole is included in a master thesis paper which will be presented in the Higher Seminar at the Uppsala University's Department of History. It will also be available at <http://www.armenica.org>. Vahagn Avedian, Editor of Armenica.org and Master Degree Student at Uppsala University, Uppsala, Sweden.

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