

**STATEMENT by PROFESSOR NORMAN STONE
CONCERNING THE "ADL STATEMENT ON THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE"
ISSUED ON 21ST AUGUST 2007**

23rd August 2007

Dear Mr Foxman,

I am writing to you about the resolution, recently-published, of the ADL, concerning the Armenian events of 1915 in Turkey.

My qualifications for doing so are I think such that any historian of the period would vouch for me: I taught at Cambridge and Oxford for thirty years before taking early retirement from the Chair of Modern History, and going to Turkey. I have just had published a book about the First World War (Penguin) which is currently being translated into a number of languages and will no doubt shortly appear in the USA. Beyond that, I have started a book about Russia and Turkey in the 1878-1930 period. A friend in Istanbul has asked me to write to you about the recent statement concerning the Armenian massacres in 1915. I am afraid to say that there will be some dismay if the Anti-Defamation League makes even such carefully-expressed assertions as to whether the massacres amounted to a genocide.

The chief authority is surely Bernard Lewis at Princeton. He told a French newspaper some years ago that there is no document proving the (genocidal) intentions of the Ottoman government, and, on the matter of definition, 'it depends what you mean by genocide'. His reward for this was to be sued in the French courts, and he even lost one of the cases with a symbolic franc's damages. He said that the Armenians used as lawyer one Maitre Verges, who defended Carlos the Jackel, a notorious holocaust-denier, and other such unsavoury characters; he volunteered to defend Saddam Hussein as well.

But there are other frankly well-qualified authorities in the USA, better-qualified in terms of academic record than anything to be found on the Armenian side. Guenther Lewy (who has just retired from a Chair at Amherst) has a recent book that is clearly fair-minded ('A disputed genocide') and it does material damage to the scholarly performance of the chief diaspora historian, Dadrian. Justin McCarthy, an Ottoman demographer, can also usefully be consulted. In Paris, at the College de France, there is Gilles Veinstein, who wrote a telling summary of the whole question in L'Histoire of 1993. These are frankly in the top flight of scholars, and this subject is an extremely difficult one, requiring knowledge not just of modern Turkish but Ottoman, which is obsolete. There are other scholars who also question the 'genocide' account, for instance a young man at Harvard, Michael Reynolds, who can handle both the Ottoman archives and the records of the Russian military administration, which took over eastern Anatolia in 1915. The Russian documents, I gather, support what the Turks have claimed about 1915 - that there was a tremendous Armenian-nationalist provocation, followed by a cruel deportation of the population.

I might add that each of these men has faced vicious attacks, and

attempts to stop publication - for instance, the manipulation of peer-review tactics, vastly exaggerating the number and significance of slips. In the case of one celebrated American historian, Stanford Shaw at UCLA, his car was booby-trapped and his house fire-bombed.

The more vociferous Armenian diaspora historians like to claim that 'historians' support them but this is just not true. Quite the contrary: on the whole, the people who know the subject at first-hand do not accept the thesis of 'genocide'.

The whole business of 1915 remains murky, but perhaps I can bullet-point some of it.

I can easily supply references for these, but I think that anyone familiar with the subject - including diaspora historians - will know my sources. In general, Professor Lewy's book (University of Utah Press) will serve in this respect.

1) The documents allegedly proving the genocide are forgeries, and the British law officers who were trying to find evidence over a four-year period of occupation in Constantinople refused to use them. With much regret, they said that they could not establish a case against some hundred men whom they were holding. The State Department were unable to help. This has not stopped the diaspora Armenians in France from using the most notorious of these forgeries (the 'Naim-Andonian documents') in their museum in the south of France.

2) The Ottomans themselves in 1916 put on trial some 1300 men for crimes committed during the deportation of the Armenians in 1915, and executed a governor.

3) The Armenians' leader, Boghos Nubar, was offered a post in the Ottoman cabinet in 1914, but turned it down on the grounds that his Turkish was not up to it.

4) The figure given by Boghos Nubar to the French for Armenian losses for use in the post-war treaties was 700,000. Most died of disease or starvation, but in eastern Turkey at the time at least one quarter of the entire population, Moslem and Christian, died of such causes. It was a terrible time.

5) The internal Ottoman documents talk of 'deportation', in the context of widespread Armenian nationalist risings in the early spring of 1915. The Russians and the French (on Cyprus) used Armenian regiments and legionaries.

6) The Armenian populations of Istanbul, Izmir and Aleppo were not affected by the deportation order. As Lewy says, it is as if the Jews of Berlin, Frankfurt and Vienna had been exempted from the Hitler genocide.

7) In the run-up to this tragic period, the Armenian nationalists murdered prominent Armenians who warned against risings - the Patriarch in Istanbul, for instance, and the mayor of Van (and many others).

8) The diaspora Armenians have never allowed this to come before a properly-constituted and competent court. Instead, they prompt

parliamentary and other bodies to 'recognize the genocide' - Canada, France, Lithuania, Chile, Wisconsin, Edinburgh City Council etc. That will be where the ADL comes in.

9) The diaspora historians also refuse to meet Turkish historians even under neutral and well-intentioned auspices (for instance, in Vienna two years ago).

It is true that diaspora historians will find answers, of greater or lesser plausibility, to these points, but they have to try very, very hard, and their attempt to muzzle transparently competent and honest historians surely speaks for itself.

I might add incidentally that I consider myself neutral and I have never written anything to deny the possibility that a genocide (in the classic sense) was considered. However I do not think that the evidence that we have really adds up, and I quite agree with Professors Lewis, Lewy and Veinstein. I also know, from my ten years in Turkey, how strong the feeling is, there, among quite ordinary people, that the diaspora Armenians are being quite vindictive and perverse about an affair in which the Armenian nationalists have far more responsibility than the diaspora would ever admit. This does Turkish-Armenian relations no good, as I am sure the 100,000 or so Armenians in Turkey, their Patriarch at the head, agree.

The important thing is to bury the hatchet, and Armenia herself, a poor, land-locked place that has lost about a quarter of its population through emigration (a good part to Istanbul) also needs this before she withers on the vine.

Yours sincerely,

Norman Stone