



THE ASSEMBLY OF ARMENIANS FROM WESTERN ARMENIA

For the attention of Mr. Mats Einarsson, Rapporteur of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Population

When reading the draft recommendation to be submitted to the Assembly on January 27th, 2005, we were first more than satisfied to notice that you were proposing the establishment of a remembrance centre for victims of forced population movements and ethnic cleansing.

This satisfaction expressed a feeling of justice regarding the macabre extermination plan applied by the Turks to all the Armenian civilian populations living in Western Armenia, occupied by Ottoman Turks.

More precisely, we quote : « The Parliamentary Assembly regrets the plights of those Europeans who suffered deportation, expulsion, transfer and forced resettlement. For their odious character, these acts offend the conscience of all the peoples of Europe and not only of the populations who had to endure them. »

And then, in paragraph 2 of the Draft Recommendation, there is no mention of the extermination plan of the Armenians from Western Armenia, carried out from 1895 to 1921, and recognized as a Genocide, for the first time on April 16th 1984 by the Permanent Peoples Tribunal, then by the Sub-Committee of Human Rights of the United Nations on August 29th 1985, by the European Parliament on June 18th 1987 and by a written statement of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe on April 24th 1998 ; no mention of the deportation of Armenians from Western Armenia towards the deserts of Mesopotamia ; no mention of the exodus of the Genocide survivors in Europe ; no mention of the ethnic cleansing of the Armenians from Nakhitchevan region and, more recently, of the ethnic cleansing of the Armenians from Chahoumian region (Upper-Karabagh).

Understanding that it might be an oversight, we further read and see that the paragraph « 3.1 *The Ottoman Empire and Turkey* » specifically relating to the case of Armenians from Western Armenia living under ottoman occupation, is totally distorted and groundless, even going so far as to deny our own existence at the time when these facts occurred.

We quote :

3.1. *The Ottoman Empire and Turkey*[4]

17. The history of the Ottoman Empire exemplifies how multinational empires did not resist nationalist movements. Its national minorities (Greeks, Serbs, Bulgarians, other nationalities of Christian faith) either favoured the creation of an independent state on national lines or called for their union to existing independent states having the same ethnic composition.

18. At that time, the displacement of entire populations was not considered as deplorable, let alone forbidden, with a view to solving nationality issues: the international community was rightly outraged by the killings of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire in 1894-1897 but did not move any criticism against a bilateral treaty between the Ottoman Empire and neighbouring Bulgaria establishing a transfer of populations (1913).

19. After the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire, its successor nation-States were still characterized by a substantial presence of ethnic minorities. Once again the solution was found through an exchange of populations: the Treaty of Lausanne (30 January 1923) legitimized the exchange of Greek and Turkish minorities between Turkey and Greece. As Article 1 of this treaty reads, '*as from the 1st May, 1923, there shall take place a compulsory exchange of Turkish nationals of the Greek Orthodox religion established in Turkish territory, and of Greek nationals of the Moslem religion established in Greek territory. These persons shall not return to live in Turkey or Greece respectively without the authorisation of the Turkish Government or of the Greek Government respectively*'. The Treaty of Lausanne, far from being objected to by the international community, was finalized thanks to the efforts of the Norwegian diplomat Fridtjof Nansen, then High Commissioner for Refugees, and approved by the League of Nations.

Then must be added the requests of Messrs. Gülçiçek and Aliyev.

[5] Mr Gülçiçek (Turkey, SOC) has asked your Rapporteur to include his written comments: *'the mass movements of Muslim and Turkish populations triggered as a result of atrocities and persecutions should be given more attention. The period between 1820 and 1922 witnessed major migratory movements from the territories lost by the Ottoman Empire, being essentially a multi-ethnic state, towards the remaining territories at the centre. 2.3 million Muslim Turks were living only in the former territories of the Ottoman Empire in the Balkans. 800,000 of these immigrated to Turkey during 1912-1926. 812,000 Turks had lived as second class minorities in the lost territories, while the remaining 630,000 persons (27%) lost their lives. Similarly, an estimated 1.5 million Muslims of Turkish and Caucasian descent had immigrated to Turkey, fleeing from persecution in the second half of the 18th century'*(comments made during the Committee meeting of 4-5 November 2004).

[5] Mr B. Aliyev (Azerbaijan, SOC) asked your Rapporteur for a summary of his written comments on *'the mass deportation of Azerbaijanis from Armenian SSR between 1948 and 1953'* to be included in the present report: *'By two decisions of 1947 and 1948 the Council of Ministers of the USSR decided to resettle 100,000 collective farm workers and other members of the Azerbaijani population from the Armenian SSR to the Kura-Araks Lowlands of the Azerbaijan SSR by 1950. In 1997 the President of Azerbaijan, Mr Heydar Aliyev, promulgated a decree on the mass deportation of Azerbaijanis from their historical and ethnic lands. Pursuant to this decree, a State Commission has been set up to conduct a comprehensive study of these tragic events'* (the comments will be reproduced in their entirety in the Acts of the Seminar on the Establishment of the Centre for European Nations' Remembrance under the auspices of the Council of Europe (Geneva, 4 November 2004).

After this first part of our reading, we have already reached, Mr. Einarsson, the peak of revisionism, this means that the intervening persons claim, in addition, that we do not exist, that in fact, we were ottoman subjects and this is in such quality of ottoman subjects that we were persecuted, slaughtered, exterminated.

No, Mr. Einarsson, this revisionist thesis cannot be developed by a person really eager to heal the sufferings of a nation destroyed up to 75 %. No, Mr. Einarsson, we do not denounce the presence of possible inaccuracies, deficiencies or errors, but a true falsification of reality regarding the Armenians from Western Armenia, their existence, their legitimate rights.

You will find enclosed with our letter a report drawn up by the French Parliament which gives evidence of our existence and confirms the qualification of Genocide applied to the historical facts, recounting the massacres, deportations and exodus of the Armenians from Western Armenia occupied by an ottoman government.

<http://www.assemblee-nat.fr/legislatures/11/pdf/rapports/r0925.pdf>

Reverting to the various statements of a former United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, we can only notice that the intervening persons hold in contempt the statements of Mr. José Ayala-Lasso, a true defender of human rights, regardless of realities.

To tell the truth, we, descendants of the Genocide survivors, exiled for ninety years subsequently to the massacres, deportations and exodus of our parents, facing the revisionism of our history, facing the determined, firmly and odiously presented willingness to pursue, outside our homeland, the denial of our existence and the extermination of our nation, we do ask you to take into account our existence as descendants of the Genocide survivors, we do ask you not to exclude us of the History of Mankind, we do ask you to take into account our unrelieved sufferings in order to show Humanity that justice exists for everyone.

Finding out the truth must be a fundamental issue when building up such a noble project as the one you intend to submit to the Assembly. You must not forget that you put forward the deepest aspirations of the nations which endured these exactions, that our eyes are turned on this willingness to find a balance with a view to reconciling Men, but if reality is already falsified, you will destroy all the substance which could give this highly symbolic projet an universal dimension.

We do exist, Mr. Einarsson, the Armenians from Western Armenia occupied by Ottoman Turks exist, even if our situation is not enviable, we shall assert our rights to exist before all international authorities.

We survived the worst, we shall survive once more !

On behalf of the Armenian National Council

Arménag Aprahamian

Statement of Mr. José Ayala-Lasso, former United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, May 28th 1995 : « *The right not to be expelled from one's homeland is a fundamental human right.* »