

Proud History under Scrutiny

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Посол Моргантау под лупой истории

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Аннотация. Статья отвечает на Резолюцию Конгресса США (S. Res. 150, Декабрь 2018) относительно Геноцида армян в Османской империи. Статья посвящена некоторым аспектам американской дипломатии в период 1915-1916 гг. Геноцида армян. Указывается, что фактическое непризнание дипломатической Америкой Геноцида армян в эти годы было обусловлено стремлением Демократической партии гарантировать повторное избрание Вильсона в 1916 году. Особо отмечена активная деятельность в этом плане председателя финансового комитета Демократической партии по проведению выборной кампании 1916 года, Генри Моргантау. Последний до этого был послом США в Османской империи, а в годы холодной войны американская пропаганда объявляла Моргантау спасителем армян. Эта несостоятельная тенденция продолжается и в Резолюции S. Res. 150.

Ключевые слова. Геноцид армян, Османская империя, Вильсон, Конгресс США, Резолюция, Генри Моргантау

Դեպքի Մորգենտաուի պատմության խոշորացույցի տակ

Համբարձումյան Ռ. Վ.

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Ամփոփում՝ Հոդվածը անդրադառնում է Օսմանյան կայսրությունում Հայոց ցեղասպանության վերաբերյալ ԱՄՆ Կոնգրեսի բանաձևին (S. Res. 150, 2018 թ. Դեկտեմբեր): Հոդվածը նվիրված է 1915-1916 թվականներին, Հայոց ցեղասպանության վերաբերյալ, ամերիկյան դիվանագիտության որոշ ասպեկտների (**գործունեության որոշ կողմերին**): Նշվում է, որ այդ տարիներին դիվանագիտական Ամերիկայի կողմից Հայոց ցեղասպանության փաստացի ճանաչումը պայմանավորված էր Դեմոկրատական կուսակցության ցանկությամբ՝ երաշխավորել Վիլսոնի վերընտրումը, 1916 թ ընտրություններում: Հատկապես նշվում է, որ այս կապակցությամբ 1916-ի ընտրարշավին, դեմոկրատական կուսակցության ֆինանսական հանձնաժողովի նախագահ, Հենրի Մորգենթաուի ակտիվ աշխատանքը: Վերջինս մինչ այդ Օսմանյան կայսրությունում ԱՄՆ դեսպանն էր, իսկ սառը պատերազմի տարիներին ամերիկյան քարոզչությունը Մորգենթաունին հռչակեց՝ հայերի փրկիչ: Այս անհիմն միտումը շարունակվում է Կոնգրեսի բանաձևում S. Res 150:

Վճռորոշ բառեր՝ Հայոց ցեղասպանություն, Օսմանյան կայսրություն, Վիլսոն, ԱՄՆ Կոնգրես, բանաձև, Հենրի Մորգենթաու

Author’s book on Wilsonian Armenia [1] has pointed at many dark corners in the history of relations between neutral official Washington and the genocide perpetuating Ottoman Empire in 1915. Recent US Senate resolution on Armenian Genocide (S. Res.150) failed to recognize this reality and hid the undesirable facts under invented ***proud history*** carpet.

The present article is written in answer to S. Res.150; it interprets some ***proud history*** episodes listed in the Resolution as down-to-earth events of Wilson’s Presidential election campaign of 1915-16. Bold italic is used only for citations from S. Res.150 and publications at the list at article’s end.

Introduction

On December 12, 2019 the US Senate voted for a resolution on Armenian Genocide that took place in Ottoman Empire during World War I. Historically, there have been two mutually conflicting public viewpoints in the US as regards country’s diplomacy during the neutrality period that covered the peak of Armenian Genocide (1915-16). S. Res. 150 declares the “final victory” of one of the two. We start with examples.

The volume [2] contains a letter from Dr. Shedd, an American Presbyterian missionary, who worked for twenty years in Persia, to the US Secretary of State Lansing The letter was published in the New York Times on February 18, 1916,

shortly after Dr. Shedd's return home. We cite some lines: *Dr. W.A. Shedd Urges Secretary Lansing to Protest to Turkey...*...for our Government to make no public protest against a crime of such magnitude perpetrated by a Government on noncombatants, the great majority of them helpless women and children is to miss an unusual opportunity to serve humanity, if not to risk grave danger of dishonor on the name of America and of lessening our right to speak for humanity and justice.

Another example is the well known ex-President Theodore Roosevelt's letter to Cleveland Dodge (one of the organizers of the famous *Near East Relief* fund) dated May 11, 1918. We cite: *...I feel that we are guilty of a peculiarly odious form of hypocrisy, when we profess friendship for Armenia and the downtrodden races of Turkey, but don't go to war with Turkey. To allow the Turks to massacre the Armenians and then solicit permission to help the survivors, and then to allege the fact that we are helping the survivors as a reason why we should not follow the only policy that will permanently put a stop to such massacres is both foolish and odious.*

Examples of the opposing viewpoint are given by the two main pronouncements of S. Res.150. We cite: *United States has a proud history of recognizing and condemning the Armenian Genocide and It is the policy of the United States to reject efforts to enlist, engage, or otherwise associate the United States Government with denial of the Armenian Genocide...*

We concentrate on two "proud" passages in S. Re. 150: one related to Henry Morgenthau, Sr., United States Ambassador to the Ottoman Empire from 1913 to 1916, and the other related to *Near East Relief*. They read: *Morgenthau...organized and led protests by officials of many countries ... and, on July 16, 1915, was instructed by United States Secretary of State Robert Lansing that the "Department approves your procedure ... stop Armenian persecution". And President Wilson ... encouraged the formation of Near East Relief chartered by an Act of Congress, which raised approximately \$116,000,000 (more than \$2,500,000,000 in 2019 dollars) between 1915 and 1930.*

Some introductory remarks on these passages.

There is a propaganda tradition presenting Morgenthau as the US Ambassador *who waged heroic crusade for Armenians* and remained *everlastingly blessed in the eyes of the Armenians* [3].

Only few realize that the *heroic crusade* was interrupted as early as January 1916 when Morgenthau left his post in Constantinople and returned to the USA to participate in Wilson's re-election campaign of 1916. From Morgenthau's farewell talk with Talaat, [4]: *"I hear you are*

going home to spend a lot of money and reelect your President," said Talaat- this being a jocular reference to the fact that I was the Chairman of the Finance Committee of the Democratic National Committee." That's very foolish; why don't you stay here and give it to Turkey? We need it more than your people do."

The article reviews the strategy of Morgenthau's fight for Wilson's victory on that new post.

As for *Near East Relief* fund, it was chartered by the Congress as late as August 1919. Yet the fund existed from early 1916 under the name *Armenian and Syrian Relief*, and Morgenthau was one of its founders.

The article conjectures, that the fund in question was started at a diplomatic meeting in Berlin, February 1916, where Morgenthau was present. Information on that meeting is contained in the last chapter of [4] entitled *Von Jagov, Zimmermann, and German-Americans* (Jagov and Zimmerman had been the highest Kaiser Diplomats). The conjecture is based on genuine State Department documents discovered in the volume [6].

I. Official silence

The well known declaration of the Entente nations from May 24, 1915, signed by Britain, France and Tsarist Russia stated culpability of the Ottoman Government for the Armenian Genocide by their heads. Alas, America (concretely, the State Department) did not express solidarity with this document. This was the start of what we call America's *official silence* on Armenian Genocide.

The letter from Dr. Shedd to the Secretary of state Lansing reproduced above implies, that eight months after the Entente May declaration the US Government still had made no public protest to the Ottoman Government. So the *official silence* period reached February 1916. Hence Dr. Shedd's letter points at a period during which the US Government practiced diplomatic denial of the Armenian Genocide.

The New York Times communication of August 6, 1915 found in [2] supports the *official silence* concept we cite: *ARMENIAN HORRORS GROW. London, Aug. 6. The Daily Chronicle says: ...The Germans, who are masters of the Central Ottoman administration, have to their everlasting shame not only permitted, but rather encouraged these horrors....There is perhaps room for an effective American protest, though we have not yet heard of one.*

About "feelings" of the State Department as regards Turkey in the Armenian Genocide period: The New York Times, October 5, 1915 wrote [2] *GOVERNMENT SENDS PLEA FOR ARMENIA*

Washington, Oct.4 ...Secretary of State Lansing tonight sent to Ambassador Morgenthau at Constantinople a message...

The message did not take the form of a protest from the Government of the United States, but directed Mr. Morgenthau to inform the Ottoman Government that the atrocities inflicted upon Armenian Christians ... would tend to jeopardize the good feeling of the people of the United States toward the people of Turkey. Secretary Lansing said today that no representations had been made to Germany regarding the treatment of the Armenians by the Turks...

Morgenthau in [4] described an episode of organization of a protest against the Armenian atrocities. In September 1915 Morgenthau's wife *Josie* was visiting Bulgaria's Queen Eleanor.

Morgenthau explains: it was undertaken [4] **in order that, as one woman to another, she might make a plea for Armenians.**

After *Josie's* visit to Sophia **Bulgarian Minister to Turkey was instructed to protest against the atrocities.** Morgenthau's ironical comment: as a result, Talaat came [4] **to one of his most ferocious moods...against the American Ambassador...however, in a few days he [Talaat] was as good natured as ever, for Bulgaria had taken sides with Turkey.**

Morgenthau was one of the pillars of the *official silence*. In February 1916 a pamphlet "**Armenian Atrocities**" authored by **Lord Bryce and M Arnold Toynbee** was published in Britain, [2]. The underlying material was obtained by Morgenthau from American missionaries and Consuls in Turkey during his stay in Constantinople; and forwarded to US State Department. Probably it was Secretary Lansing, acting on a directive from Morgenthau, sent that material to Britain, not to interfere with Wilson's Presidential election campaign of 1916.

The "**Armenian Atrocities**" story has a continuation. Morgenthau left Constantinople by end January, and arrived in New York on February 22, 1916 [4].

Doubtless he was in a position to organize immediate speedy publication of the "**Armenian Atrocities**" in America. Nothing of the kind: in America that material was published [2] as late as November 1916, i.e. after Wilson's re-election.

Now the pamphlet bore the title **Lord Bryce's Report On Turkish Atrocities In Armenia**", it appeared in "Current History" of The New York Times. The date of this publication discloses the purpose of the delay and with it the purpose of *official silence* as a whole. It was as follows.

The 1910 US census counted more than eight million German-Americans. To make these millions

vote for Wilson, it was necessary to make them believe, that America under Wilson will not go to war against Central powers. The practice of *official silence* was to convince the voters that Wilson considered Armenian atrocities not a reason enough to betray the policy that kept "*America out of war*" and would remain neutral to the end. The promise was not kept; in 1917 the US declared war on Germany.

Berlin meeting

Addressing the US Congress session of 6th of December 1915 President Wilson accused American diplomacy in disloyalty. (*There are citizens of the United States, I blush to admit, ... who debase our politics to the uses of foreign intrigue.*) Less than two months after this Wilson's speech Morgenthau lost his position as Ambassador and left Constantinople. However, Democratic Party saved Morgenthau for political life by making him Party treasurer. This new position encouraged Morgenthau to strengthen contacts with Germans.

The last chapter of [4] begins with the words: **Our train drew into Berlin station on February 2, 1916**, and ends with **on February 22, 1916 I found myself once more sailing into New York harbour – and home.** In Berlin Morgenthau was received by both German Foreign Minister (*Von Jagov*) and his Deputy (*Zimmermann*). The chapter tries to convince the reader that the topic of Berlin discussions was assimilation of the **German-Americans** in the USA. However, certain genuine State Department documents from the period **February, 2 - 22, 1916** give a clue in a different direction.

From Constantinople to Berlin Morgenthau traveled in a special car that belonged to Turkish Crown Prince Izzeddin, accompanied by German Admiral Usedom. Morgenthau stresses [2] that Usedom **was upon friendly terms with His Majesty** and was the captain of the Kaiser's yacht. In Berlin, using the help of US Ambassador in Germany J.W.Gerard, Morgenthau was able to contact even President Wilson himself. Thus Morgenthau cites the words Von Jagov addressed to him: **I wish you would cable the President that you have gone over the matter with me and now understand the German point of view. Won't you please ask him to do nothing until you have reached the other side and explained the whole thing personally?**

Morgenthau remarked in [4]: **Mr. Gerard and I cabled immediately.**

The, page 428 of [6] contains a cable of February 12, 1916, addressed by the Secretary of State Lansing to American Embassy in Turkey. The cable reads;

Washington February 12, 1916, 2 p.m.

... *The Government of the United States ... again earnestly appeals to the sense of humanity and justice of the Turkish Government and urges it to take immediate steps towards the amelioration of the conditions at present existing among the Armenians and towards the redress of the injuries already inflicted upon them. The Department at the present time is considering the question whether or not it is justified in longer withholding from the American people the facts now in its possession. The decision of the Department as to this question will be greatly influenced by the action, which the Turkish Government may take upon the appeal on behalf of the Armenians now made to it by the United States – Lansing.*

The same volume at page 453 contains a similar cable from the Secretary of State, dated February 16, 1916, addressed to the German Ambassador in the USA Bernstorff. From the latter cable:

[Lansing] *is greatly in doubt as to whether [he is] longer justified in keeping from the American people the terrible facts in [his] possession.* Also, Lansing informs Bernstorff, that he asked American Charge d'Affairs at Constantinople to urge Ottoman Government to take prompt action *to redress the injuries which have been inflicted upon the Armenians...*

These cables disclose the probable real topic of Berlin meeting: in Berlin Morgenthau promised to prolong the *official silence*, while the German side promised to finance Turkey in *amelioration* the conditions existing among the Armenians, via *Armenian and Syrian Relief*. The book [4] gives no information on this, probably because the war censor of [4] was Lansing himself, see [5].

This conclusion is confirmed by the date of the document that follows. In [6], page 505, we find the *Report of the Armenian and Assyrian Relief Committee at Van*, sent to the Secretary of State, Washington from Tiflis, Russia, May 26, 1916.

The Russian authorities, both civil and military, were extremely friendly to us and furnished every facility for carrying on relief work of all kinds. ...The Russian government has made very large appropriations for reconstruction work of all kinds. The various Armenian Committees deeply interested in return of the refugees to their homes, and our Committee which having comparatively limited means, has been ... able to render valuable supplementary aid. The people can be trusted to make industrious use of the safety and other favorable conditions maintained by the Russian Government.

A cable in [6], page 545 gives an idea how effective was in fact *amelioration* on the territories that remained under Turkish rule.

Telegram from US Embassy, Constantinople, Oct. 17, 1916, to Secretary of State, Washington:

...In spite of official opposition, it has been possible to reach thousands, and save their lives temporarily. But situation demands... that Germany and Austro-Hungary be induced to force their Turkish ally to cease all further deportation and allow free relief work...If the gravity of the situation calls for such action... personal letters reciting the facts, written by the President to the Emperors of Germany and Austria may produce the desired result. In that case publicity should be given such letters.

To end the article, we turn to the image of Morgenthau created by propaganda after WW-II. In 1945 President Truman proclaimed a doctrine of special relations with Turkey, and US Congress gave billions of dollars to Turkey. To justify this, a *proud* image of the diplomat that started USA - Turkey cordial relations was needed, that is of Morgenthau. This image is outlined in [3] of which we present a passage:

Mr. Morgenthau could have kept on sending just reports to Washington. He did much more. He stood up to the tyranny of the Talaats and the Kaiser. He stirred State Department chiefs into action. Almost single-handedly this small blue-eyed wiry man aroused an entire nation on the plight of the starving Armenians until help came in the form of Near East Relief and other agencies. Orphans who had survived were housed; others were gathered from caves, forests and hovels; the starving were nourished, the ill tended.

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