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120 BRANTFORD TURKS

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Did Canada carry out Genocide against Ottoman Turks in 1914? Limited available evidence in Canadian archives is highly suggestive ☀ matching or even exceeding what the Ottoman military authorities did for the disloyal Ottoman Armenians in 1915.

At the outset of WWI, by order of the Federal government under the War Measures Act [WMA], a small group of Ottoman Turks, residents in Brantford, Ont., were forcibly relocated to a POW Camp in Kapuskasing, Northern Ontario….

All these Turks perished during and after this internment. Their only crime was being Ottoman Muslims. Ottoman Christians (e.g. Armenian) residents were untouched.

Timing of this little known Canadian history is in sharp contrast to the Harper Governments recognition under M 381 of the 1915 Otto-man Relocation of Anatolian Armenians as Genocide. Both the Canadian and the Ottoman decisions on forced relocation were war-related.

What is Genocide? The UN Genocide Convention 1948 states:

Article II: In the present Convention, genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such:

1. Killing members of the group;

2. Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;

3. Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;

4. Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;

5. Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.

This definition is legal and is subject to fine-tuning. The term Genocide was coined well after WWI as a result of the efforts of the ultra-nationalist Armenian Dasnak group.

The Convention definition is loaded with legal and logistical problems, in particular issues with interpretation, verification and enforcement.

As regards interpretation, one can argue that the Canadian government in 1914 did not act with intent to destroy the Brantford Ottoman Turks. These Turks were declared enemy aliens, along with Germans, Austrians, and Ukrainians ☀□□□□□ to be put away in military custody.

What is good for the goose must be true for the gander! The same argument would apply in the case of the Ottoman military decision in 1914 to relocate Anatolian

Armenians ☀□□□□ even more justification, it seems, since these Armenians actively fought with invading Russians who occupied Ottoman lands.[i]

Many Ottoman Armenians died and perished during forced marches. In the case of 120 Brantford Turks, all perished ☀ none survived the POW internment. These early Turks in Canada vanished in captivity or after.

Number of human losses of Brantford Turks and Ottoman Armenians differ greatly ☀ but policy of forced relocation is identical ☀ and in the Genocide Convention, INTENT is the key.

Verification of official intent depends on historical documentation. Only official records of Brantford Turks and Anatolian Armenians can shed light on exactly what happened.

Tragically, the Canadian government took a decision in 1948 to destroy all records on this black chapter of Canadian history. By contrast, the Turkish official archives are open to all historians and experts for study and investigation.

Most tellingly, however, the Canadian government has taken courageous steps to set right the wrong done the WMA officially apologizing to Ukrainians and the Japanese [in the case of WWII]. To date no such apology exists for the Turks of Brantford, Ontario.

The Turkish government has signed Protocols with Armenia that provides, inter alias, the setting up of an independent historical commission to determine what exactly happened in 1914 with Ottoman Armenians. Diaspora Armenian communities, in Canada as well as in the USA, have rejected these Protocols which, sadly, remain inactive.

What of the lost Ottoman Turks of Canada? They are all gone. Only a Turkish Lot exists in the public Cemetery in Brantford, a piece of land they themselves purchased privately, a self-dedication marked simply as Muslim Ottomans in 1909. Currently a Plaque in their memory stands frozen on the agenda of the Brantford City Council. Justice demands Federal recognition of their loss.

This article originally appeared on: http://turkishcanada.org/120-brantford-turks/

[i] Click here to see the Armenian source: http://armenians-1915.blogspot.com/2010/12/3186-wwii-german-americans-vs-wwi.html

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