

Peter Balakian Lecture at Dutchess Community College

I had the opportunity to attend an important lecture given on 25 April 2019 by Professor Peter Balakian at Dutchess Community College (DCC) advertised as “The Burning Tigris” with a sub-title of “The Armenian Genocide and Modernity.” After listening to Prof. Balakian for close to an hour, I felt that just about every point he had made during his lecture deserved a rebuttal.

Rather than delving into the details, which really require an open debate, I asked a fundamental question after thanking him for his version of history about which he had enlightened us, as follows: “Can you prove for us that there was a so-called ‘Armenian Genocide,’ bearing in mind that “genocide” is a legal term according to the **United Nations 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide**, and that for an event to be called genocide three basic tenements must have been met, namely: 1. genocide charges can only be litigated by a “competent tribunal,” 2. which shall follow “due process,” and 3. to prove “intent to destroy? For otherwise, don’t you think you would be defrauding the unsuspecting public that there was a so-called ‘Armenian Genocide’ when we all know that there wasn’t?”

The reply by Prof. Balakian was rather nebulous saying that perhaps sometime in the future it may come up in front of a court just as what the Americans, for example, had done to the Native American Indians in the past. As somebody later commented, this was a cop-out on his part. We know that a court determination is the very essence, not a peripheral issue, of genocide debate. In their arguments the Armenian Diaspora typically avoids the legal aspect.

After the meeting, I talked with several DCC personnel, including the organizing professor, pointing out that what was really needed in educational institutions was a free and open debate about such issues as “Armenian Genocide,” -which, by the way, has always been refused by certain Armenian organizations to which Prof. Balakian belongs- and which has been actually debated at the competent “European Court of Human Rights,” (ECHR) back in 2013 stating that “...The Court found that Mr. Perinçek, who during various conferences in Switzerland, had described the Armenian genocide as an “international lie”, had not committed an abuse of his rights within the meaning of Article 17 of the Convention. The Court underlined that the free exercise of the right to openly discuss questions of a sensitive and controversial nature was one of the fundamental aspects of freedom of expression and distinguished a tolerant and pluralistic democratic society from a totalitarian or dictatorial regime...” continuing to add further that “The Court [ECHR] took the view that the notion of ‘genocide’ was a precisely defined legal concept. According to the case-law of the International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, for the crime of genocide to be made out, the acts must have been perpetrated with intent to destroy not only certain members of a particular group but all or part of the group itself. Genocide was a very narrow legal concept that was, moreover, difficult to substantiate. The Court was not convinced that the general consensus to which the courts referred in convicting Mr. Perinçek could relate to such very specific points of law.” *[Emphases added]* .

Further, it should be noted that on 24 April every year (which they call it as a commemorative day for their latest number of 1.5 million Christian Armenians killed not to mention at least just as many or more Moslems that were killed during those terrible days of the First World War) Armenian advocates push for an “Armenian Resolution” to pass the Congress of the United States condemning Turkey and its people for “genocide.” Of course, some of the killing of Moslems were due to fighting in the war, depravation, etc. But more than half a million civilian Moslems were massacred by the armed militant Armenian bands alone.

So, my take-away from Prof. Balakian’s lecture was that he chose his sources to fit the Armenian agenda while ignoring the more relevant recent decisions of the European Court of Human Rights, and especially that of the French Constitutional Council, which as recent as in 2016 reaffirmed its earlier decision that a

crime against humanity or genocide must be established by a competent court, not by the legislature. Even more to the point is that Prof. Balakian uses what is proven to be a forged Hitler saying about the so-called "Armenian Genocide" (the saying also being inserted as the preamble of just about every Armenian Resolution introduced and yet failed in the Congress year after year) as the basis of his newly minted thesis of "Modernity in Killing" techniques that presumably the Ottomans invented, rather than relying on what the First Prime Minister of the First Armenian Republic had to say in his Manifesto he delivered in Bucharest way back in 1923 against the mischief and misfortune that the Armenian Dashnagtzoutiun (Dashnak terrorists) had brought upon his people by colluding with the Russians against their Ottoman compatriots with whom they had lived down the street from each other in peace and harmony over six centuries. That Manifesto is religiously skipped by the Armenian genocide advocates.

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