April 9, 2007

Letter to the Editor,

The following letter is in response to the April 9 article by Andrew Borowiec. In addition to the Armenians, Greek and Assyrian Christians were likewise victims of Turkish orchestrated Genocide under the Young Turks and their nationalist successor, Mustafa Kemal. Their are numerous historical documents emanating from Christian missionaries, humanitarian groups providing relief, and prominent American diplomats such as Henry Morgenthau and George Horton who have left behind proof attesting to the genocidal nature of the Turkish nationalists. In addition the Greek Orthodox Church has additional proof of Turkish plans as can be seen by the protests of Bishops in Trebizond, Cappadocia, and Smyrna to the Turkish policies of extermination.

The Archbishop of Smyrna Chrysostom had been sanctioned by the Young Turks as a result of his protests to the exterminations of the Christians during the First World War by being denied his candidacy for Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople. In September 1922, Chrysostom was brutally murdered upon the orders of Kemalist General Noureddin Pasha which conquered Smyrna from the Greeks. The Western powers with numerous economic, business, and political interests in Asia Minor tolerated the Genocide of the Turkish nationalists. Western policies toward Turkey remain the great shame of the Western democracies up to the present day, as Turkish atrocities have been overlooked time and again up to the present day.

The article is quite wrong when it refers to Turkey as a valuable ally. The Turkish government is now officially in the hands of Islamic fundamentalists who are being challenged by tyrannical thugs and nationalist extremists in the military. Neither of these factions looked favorably upon the United States effort in Iraq as can be seen by Ankara's refusal to assist the United States. In addition, Turkish nationalists who succeeded in invading Cyprus in 1974 and ethnically cleansing 200,000 Greek Cypriots now have their eyes toward the Kurdish regions of Northern Iraq. America should beware of depending on Turkey, for American efforts in Iraq depend heavily on the Kurds of Northern Iraq who have made clear they will resist any and all Turkish claims toward the region. The United States should disengage itself from its unsavory alliance with Turkey, and should begin acknowledging the historical record which clearly proves Turkey has been guilty of Genocide, while extending protection toward Christian minorities in Turkey today which continue being oppressed by Turkish backed terrorists.

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Denying massacre hurts ties to West
By Andrew Borowiec
THE WASHINGTON TIMES
April 9, 2007

NICOSIA, Cyprus -- Turkey's persistent denial of the massacres of Armenians during World War I is threatening the European Union's common energy policy, relations with France and the operations of a major U.S. base on Turkish territory.

In the latest move to block efforts by the French parliament to brand the 90-year-old massacres as genocide, Turkey has frozen relations with Gaz de France, an energy partner in a consortium planning a major pipeline to bring Caspian Sea natural gas to the heart of Europe, bypassing Russia.

Shortly before announcing the freeze last week, the government of Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan warned that approval by the U.S. Congress of a similar bill would cast "a serious shadow" over U.S. relations with Turkey, a key NATO ally.

Diplomats said the Turkish warning might include restriction of U.S. military activities at Incirlik Air Base in Turkey, a logistics and transportation hub for much of the Middle East. The Bush administration has urged congressional leaders to consider the strategic implications of the bill.

Turkey's refusal to accept responsibility for the deaths of an estimated 1.5 million Armenians by the Ottoman empire has dogged its relations with U.S. and European partners for many years.

Now it has affected plans to construct a 2,000-mile, $6 billion pipeline project named Nabucco to carry natural gas from Iran and the Caspian Sea area across Turkey, Bulgaria, Romania and Hungary to Austria.

The project, slated to start next year, is described as the European Union's first significant effort to forge a joint energy policy in the face of Russia's use of gas supplies as a weapon in its diplomacy.

A quarter of natural gas used in Europe comes from Russia, which in early 2005 turned off the taps to Ukraine in a pricing dispute. Ever since, the diversification of energy supplies has been an EU priority.

"Turkey knows its value as a major transit country for this project and is making the most of it," said one diplomatic source. The Turkish Energy Ministry said the freeze on Gaz de France would be reconsidered after the French presidential elections in May.

Turkey's latest move against an EU member country comes at a time of increasing nationalism and political fervor before a Turkish presidential vote in May and parliamentary elections that must be held by November.
Mr. Erdogan, a potential presidential candidate, is apparently working at solidifying his own and his governing Justice and Development Party’s (AKP) power base.

Nationalism is growing as a factor in Turkish politics, partly because of the slow pace of membership negotiations with the European Union. Many Turks think the Europeans don’t want them in their midst.

Strong nationalist feelings are particularly evident when it comes to the Armenian massacres. Turkey says the Armenians -- accused of cooperating with Russia when it was at war with Turkey -- died during a "resettlement march" to Syria.

Ankara says there were no more than 300,000 victims, as opposed to the 1.5 million cited in most Western documents dealing with the massacres.