

Armenians Haunted by Massacre 50 Years Ago

Historical Tragedy in Which an Estimated 1.2 Million Died Is Marked Around World

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BEIRUT, Lebanon (AP) — "The soldiers came one morning and led my father and my two brothers outside the town and shot them. A few days later the police ordered my mother and me and my two sisters to leave our house.

"Everyone left in the town was marched out. We walked for weeks. My mother and my sister died on the way. My other sister was pretty and a policeman took her and I never saw her again. I was the only one who survived."

The speaker was a white-haired Armenian woman, her face a lacework of blue tattoos from the desert tribe that adopted her 50 years ago. What she survived was the massacre of Armenian Christians in Turkey, an historical tragedy being marked this weekend around the world.

Massive Slaughter

Hundreds of elderly Armenians in the Middle East recount the same haunting memories, for the slaughter was so massive it wiped out almost half the Armenian population of Turkey. Historical estimates say as many as 1.2 million Armenians died from bullets, bayonets, starvation or exposure, and countless women vanished into harems.

U.S. Ambassador Henry Morgenthau protested in 1918 that the atrocities "surpass the most beastly and diabolical cruelties ever before perpetrated or imagined in the history of the world."

"The world remembers the Jews of Nazi Germany and the Arabs of Palestine, but we are the forgotten refugees," muses a gnarled priest in Beirut. "Our lands are gone, we have had no reparations, and Turkey has never even laid a wreath for the Armenians."

were toned down for a mourning period.

The Turkish Embassy here, whose government regards the Armenian slayings as an affair of the old Ottoman Empire and not of modern Turkey, has quietly expressed fear that today's commemoration could lead to trouble or violence by the Armenians.

The story of Armenia is a story of trouble. Built 22 centuries ago around what is now the frontier between the Soviet Union and Turkey, Armenia was the world's first nation to adopt Christianity as a state religion, 300 years after Christ.

Threat to Government

When World War I erupted and Armenia was no longer a nation, the ruling Moslem "young Turks" claimed the Armenian Christians, with their revolutionary parties, were a threat to the Turkish government.

Official British documents from 1918, however, argue that the Armenians were at first ardent supporters of the young Turks, and Armenians "were kindling the essential spark of life energy . . ." in the country, dominating Turkey's commerce, industry, finance and intellectual life.

World War I, some historians contend, was not the cause of the massacres, but an opportunity for the Turkish rulers to wipe out Armenian demands for equality and reform.

On the night of April 24, 1915, 300 Armenian leaders were executed and deportations began.

Few Survived Marches

British documents and an account by historian Arnold Toynbee are filled with phrases such as "exterminated by the most coldblooded and fiendish methods," or "death of unspeakable horror."

While the men were exe-

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COMMEMORATION—Survivors and survivors of the 1915 Armenian massacre by Turkish troops gather at Los Angeles City Hall

planned to drown our women and children in the sea but instead our 600 armed men held off the Turkish army for 40 days.

"Then a French warship saw our signal—A Red Cross flag made from bed sheets and underwear — and French ships came and took us to Egypt. About 4,500 of us got out."

Far From United

Despite their background of common hardship, the Armenians are far from united. Sometimes violent divisions exist among three political parties, with much of the argument focused on their attitude toward Soviet Armenia.

Even their Christianity is divided, with Roman Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant churches, and the Orthodox Church has been split for almost 500 years with two patriarchs. While many Armenians today accept Catholicos Vazken I of Soviet Armenia as their spiritual leader, others regard Catholicos

school teacher, says: "The Armenian Union is not recognized by the United States as an Armenian patriotic organization. This is a truly patriotic organization which keeps u-

500 Armenian Attend Rites Note Massacre

More than 500 persons attended memorial ceremony at City Hall Saturday to mark the 50th anniversary of the massacre of more than 1 million Armenians by Turkish troops during World War I.

Led by James T. T. . . nian, general chairman of the commemorative committee, 11 survivors of the massacre placed a black wreath at the base of the flagpole the Armenian flag was raised.

Governor's Words

A message from Governor Brown read in part: "On this commemorative day of the Armenian massacre of 1915, the world

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