

[PDF] The Burning Tigris: The Armenian Genocide And America's Response

Peter Balakian - pdf download free book

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Description:

From Publishers Weekly Now faded from memory in the shadow of the Holocaust, the Turkish slaughter of more than a million Armenians in 1915-1916 was a virtual template for the 20th-century horrors that followed, and much of what Balakian describes so powerfully is now chillingly familiar: inhuman brutality; mass deportations of helpless civilians (often in overcrowded railroad boxcars); headlines screaming of "systematic race extermination"; activists and intellectuals calling for intervention; and, most devastatingly, the lack of political will in the West to intervene to stop the slaughter. Balakian exposes the roots of the genocide in the "total war" atmosphere of WWI, which combusted with the pan-Turkish nationalism of the Young Turk government, inflamed Muslim rage against "infidel" Armenian Christians, and a long-simmering Ottoman hatred of the Armenians dating to Sultan Abdul Hamid II and his slaughters in the 1890s. Balakian, who wrote so movingly of

the impact of the genocide on his own family in *Black Dog of Fate*, also underscores how well known the Armenian destruction was in America through detailed reports by U.S. consuls throughout Turkey and steady newspaper reporting, and how great the response was in providing humanitarian assistance to refugees and survivors. In a horrifying account, city by city, region by region, Balakian quotes firsthand testimony about the decimation of the Armenian population and their towns and culture. Yet he retains the measured tone of a historian throughout; if anything, he lets Woodrow Wilson off too easily for not declaring war on Turkey. But readers will come away sadly convinced that Armenians' brave but doomed stand in Van should be as celebrated as the Warsaw ghetto uprising, and the corpse-strewn Lake Gaeljak as well known as Babi Yar. 16 pages of b&w photos and maps not seen by PW.

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From Culminating in the organized murder of more than one million Armenians in 1915, the Armenian genocide was both a systematized continuation of violence begun in the nineteenth century and a chilling premonition of larger and more systematic European genocide to come. A detailed account of the "hidden holocaust" sewn together from archival research and the testimony of survivors, this selection also documents another tragedy: America's response to the crisis. In the 1890s, led by William Jennings Bryan and Theodore Roosevelt, among notable others, American Protestants felt a sympathy for the plight of their fellow Christians that was both heartfelt and fashionable. It was, argues Balakian, an inaugural moment for the American defense of international human rights. Yet political concerns kept Woodrow Wilson from declaring war on Turkey, and by the late twentieth century, moral clarity sadly erodes in the face of cold war necessity and oil-driven foreign policy. Even today, Turkey denies that a genocide ever took place. In this important book, Balakian proves adept at presenting both human horror and political tragedy. *Brendan Driscoll*
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