

WHAT WILL WE AS AUSTRALIANS REMEMBER?



Abalinx -Peter Adamis 19 April 2015

Soon we will be engulfed by media reports of the ANZAC spirit and heroic deeds of a bygone past that created a nation and a people. While at the same time, a battle would be raging on social media and other media outlets in attempts to convince and attract the wider community of an act of barbarism that occurred around the same time as the landing of the ANZACS at Gallipoli. Do we need to be reminded of such acts of brutality, plunder, rape, pillage, murder, forced evacuations and an ethnic cleansing or will we romanticise the acts of bravery skill at arms and glorify the men who fought at Gallipoli and at the Western front.

I often wonder just what is important during our life. Remembering the past, living in the present or thinking of the future. I ask this because at one point in time we as normal thinking, breathing and living beings will want to question our own existence and will want to know and acknowledge that life was worth living. During our life's journey contribute to the betterment of mankind, to the welfare of others and did we spend the time developing as an individual to the highest possible level.

At the age of 65, I have managed to survive in a world that was engulfed by the most destructive forces ever created by man and nature and yet despite all of these unnatural and natural calamities, I have not lost my sense of wellbeing, my faith in my creator or that of my fellow man. Yet I despair of the evils of this world and wonder like many others before me, why does it all happen. To be quite honest, it is beyond my grasp or intellect to fathom why we as a species can be so cruel and dismissive of acts of brutality against one another. Are we merely just animals that have a conscious and as such find ways to justify our bestial acts against each other? We find justification of going to war on the flimsiest excuses in order to retain the edge and sharpen our military competitiveness in the event we too come under threat.

To understand fully the difference between the two we need to review the history of the two from an Australian point of view and make our own conclusions. In doing so much material will be

gleaned from The Official History of Australia in the War - of 1914 to 1918 and of other material written by authors better acquainted with such matters. The reason I have written this article is to remind the readers that not all that we are told or hear or see in this age of technology is true and that to seek out the truth one must go far back as possible to original sources and draw out the relevant facts and then and only then can we draw the necessary conclusions without the emotional attachments.

Prior the WW1, Australia had a program based on military lines that all young men would undertake military training at a young age. H.S. Gullet in writing about the war said that; "perhaps no young *man* in any age, not even excepting the Greeks, had been so distinguished by so great a love of physical exercise , and so much achievement in competition with men of other countries".

These young men would learn the rudiments of military training and as they grew up many would enter in to the military fraternities such as the Rifle volunteers, military reserves or in some cases as a regular. Those who wished to further their military career would travel overseas to Great Britain and enlist in its forces for a prescribed period and then return back home to Australia. Australians had already been known to be involved in the New Zealand Maori wars, in China, Russian-Japanese wars, New Guinea, Boer wars and for some with the British Army seen action in India and the Sudan.

This is important as to shed light on the capability of Australians to wage war in a disciplined manner when the time came and not as depicted by the British officers who looked down upon the average Aussie digger as being uncouth and poorly disciplined. This unwarranted attitude would soon change as WW1 progressed and millions of lives were being lost.

According to H.S. Gullet who wrote the volume on The Australian Imperial Force in Sinai and Palestine; "The young Australian has never been in the slightest degree of warlike disposition. Except for the occasional brawl in the gold digging days, '*Australia*' has never known bloodshed." Although this statement is technically correct from a White Australia policy, much bloodshed had already been shed by the ethnic cleansing in certain parts of Australia of the indigenous population, the Aboriginal first peoples. This is ironic because many Australians of aboriginal heritage enlisted during WW1 and fought in Gallipoli and the Western front, only return back to a country that did not recognise them as equals. This in my mind is one of the darkest stains on our history and more needs to be done to come to terms with this sordid past and acknowledge and recognise our first people's contribution to this country.

H.S. Gullet goes on to say "The keen and surprisingly cynical sense of humour, which is sharply defined in almost every Australian as his sense of sight or hearing, makes Australians shy of any sense of patriotism. The Australian countryman has never been fond of flying the Union jack or even less his own Southern Cross flag." How times have changed 100 years on! We now find it abhorrent and rightly so to see on the news media a few recalcitrant protesters burning the Australian flag and being stirred up emotionally as if the flag was a living symbol. Those who are

well versed in Australian military know full well that not one Australian fought and died for the Australian flag but have stood beneath it and saluted it as a mark of respect.

As for loyalty or going to battle for the mother country, Australians did not do so out of patriotism, but rather for the adventure and to see the world at the expense of a grateful government who was only too happy to oblige them as they required troops to fight overseas far from home. Others wanted to leave a life of drudgery, skip paying their debts, some to further their military career, a few to escape jail and or from the clutches of the law and then there were the ones that were stirred by the patriotic speeches of the politicians who were seeking to fill the ranks of the much needed manpower to overcome the "evil Boche (German) who ate babies and raped innocent women". This was also an ironic turn up for the books as young Australians of German heritage enlisted while their parents and relatives were drummed off to concentration camps.

"Australians who had been educated on British lines and grew up on the poetry of England Scotland and Wales would have a rough knowledge of current affairs in England. His patriotism was therefore a very real and live thing, which, always smouldering, if without sign of smoke, burst into flame when the honour of the old land of his father's was touched. It *therefore* mattered not who or where the foe was as Australia's young men soon found *themselves* engaged in a long and bloody war with Turkey". What is also of some interest is that "before the war, it is improbable that there were a hundred Turks in Australia.

Out of that hundred at least two Turks living in Australia took up arms against Australians in their own back yard as soon as they heard that Turkey and Australia were at war. A battle ensued with the two Turks and Government forces, a battle which if one is interested can be found on social media outlets and in the history books of Australian military history. These two Turks felt that it was their duty to fight against the infidel no matter where they resided and that their honour was also at stake.

When Turkey entered the war on the side of Germany, it did so because it needed to stop the shrinking of its territory and was always suspicious of the territorial aims of the British, French, Italians and the Russians upon its territory. Turkey had lost Egypt, Serbia, Greece, Tripoli, Syria, and other parts of the Balkans and was often referred to as the "Poor man of Europe". The great powers on the other hand had already made plans to carve it up amongst themselves. They almost succeeded had it not been for the bickering and disunity that followed the Great War and as such Turkey regrouped and was able to effectively use the "divide and rule" concept and thus retain its sovereignty under the leadership of Mustapha Kemal.

Mustapha Kemal later to become the father of Turkey and named Kemal Ataturk was the leader that faced the allies at Gallipoli ad defeated them. This defeat gave the Turkish people a renewed sense of nationalism and patriotism encouraged by the German high command who knew the real truth of the Gallipoli campaign and why the allies evacuated. The German high command knew that without the military expertise, the engineers, artillery support, machine guns, equipment, Western type of military training and discipline as well as military strategists and military manpower support, the Turkish army were no match for the well disciplined allies.

It is of interest to note that Mustapha Kemal had in 1909 attended the Committee of Union of Progress (CUP) meeting in Thessaloniki and was well aware of what had planned on the future of Turkey. He was also aware of the ethnic cleansing plans, who the leaders were and of the secret messages that were passed onto trusted associates which in most if not all cases bypassed normal chains of command and countermanded any orders that did not sit well with their plans.

In fact when the leaders of the Committee of Union of Progress (CUP) were ousted and went into voluntary exile, Mustapha Kemal in order to gain a strong hold on the new Government installed into important government roles the very persons responsible for the ethnic cleansing of Turkey which included the brutal massacre of men, women and children who lived for centuries within the national borders of Turkey. These hapless people were forced out of their homes, separated from their menfolk (who were liquidated) and the women and children forced to walk thousands of miles through hostile country with the majority dying in the Syrian desert. Those that managed to survive the ordeal ended up in Syria and what is now Lebanon. The concept of ethnic cleansing was a plan created by the three ringleaders of the CUP and later confirmed to the American Ambassador as fact during one of the many meetings between the two nations.

The Turkish plan to eliminate all non Moslem peoples was encouraged by their allies the Germans who wanted Turkey to remain in the war against the Allies. Germany has much to answer for as well as Turkey for the crimes against humanity and the use of the word "genocide" is now considered to be an offence if uttered or printed in Turkey as a stain against the Turkish honour. What is not well known is that the majority of the average Turk in the street did not approve of what their government was doing and abhorred the senseless slaughter of innocent people that had lived amongst them for centuries.

Yet they too were powerless in the face of Government forces and followed meekly the orders of the government until such times as world opinion turned against them and the leaders of the CUP escaped and went into voluntary exile hoping to rule from abroad. This was not to be as history has a way of levelling things out. Some were assassinated, others put on trial, many got away with it and others were given plum government jobs.

The new Turkish Government under the leadership of Mustapha Kemal distanced them from the CUP and their involvement with the massacres, forced evacuation and "genocide" of its non Moslem populations. Despite these cosmetic demonstrations of good governance and break from the past, Mustapha Kemal did not stop the continual abuses of ethnic cleansing and similar programs but actively pursued the CUP program as a means of ridding Turkey of its Non Moslem population. By the end of 1922 the original plan of the CUP was almost completed. The world began to realise the full horror of the deception played out by the Turks and although their reaction was a unified one, the Turkish leadership knew that it had won what it wanted in the first place. Turkey for the Turks only.

Turkey had been cleared of its Armenian, Greek, Syrian and Jewish pollutions by all brutal means, culminating with the transfer of populations between the Greeks and Turks based on religion only. This transfer of populations caused much anguish for all concerned but it did in my

mind put a stop to any further senseless slaughter of innocents. Those of the Greeks that were not slaughtered from the Pontus region as well as the Aegean seaboard such as Smyrna and other seaports along the coast were deported to Greece while thousands of Assyrians who did not find a haven in Greece were either killed off or found shelter in such places as Lebanon and/or Syria.

The most horrific crimes against a people were made against the Armenians. The Armenians were targeted because the Turks felt that they had revolted against the Turkish nation when in fact all that they were doing was to defend their homes, families and relatives from the systematic slaughter of their people. There are countless of stories, witnesses from all nations including the Germans who were operating within Turkey and witnessed much of the horrors that were being carried out right under their noses by their Turkish allies. If it was not a genocide then it definitely was an ethnic cleansing of epic proportions which was soon forgotten by a world that was entering a depression that affected the whole world.

Not until the grand children of the Armenian survivors did things come to the boil and records of survivor tales and material was compiled in order to bring about a case of genocide being recognised by world leaders. As a side note, what many are not aware of is that a high ranking military commander residing in Turkey during the massacres of the Armenians, Greeks and Assyrians was advising Washington that it was in the long term interests of the United States to support the Turks in their bid to create a new government on the Western model.

This advice was given as it afforded and attracted many investors into Turkey and created trade deals that are still in operation now some 100 years later. Today the United States, the most powerful nation in the world has consistently refused to acknowledge that Turkey committed genocide against the Armenians and conducted a program of ethnic cleansing. However the domestic and political situation in Turkey is changing rapidly and one hopes that in our life time we shall hear of a Turkish Government coming to terms with its demons of the past.

100 years on will come to a close on the 24 April and 25 April 2015. One hopes that we as Australians would have matured sufficiently to acknowledge that a massacre and ethnic cleansing of Armenians, Assyrians and Greeks did occur during and post WW1 and that yes the word genocide may be applied to what occurred within the sovereign borders of Turkey as we know it today. At the same time we too must acknowledge our own ethnic cleansing of our indigenous population and come to grips with the concept that we are all Australians no matter the colour of our skin, heritage or faith. We are but one people - Australians.



Peter Adamis is a Journalist/Commentator and writer. He is a retired Australian military serviceman and an Industry organisational & Occupational (OHS) & Training Consultant whose interests are within the parameters of domestic and international political spectrum. He is an avid blogger and contributes to domestic and international community news media outlets as well as to local and Ethnic News. He holds a Bachelor of Adult Learning & Development (Monash), Grad Dip Occupational Health & Safety, (Monash), Dip. Training & Assessment, Dip Public Administration, and Dip Frontline Management. Contact via Email: abalinx@netspace.net.au or via Mobile: 0409965538