



Attention:
Foreign Affairs
Legislative Aide

Armenian National Committee of America

NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS

To: Friends
From: Aram Hamparian, Executive Director
Date: March 17, 2006

Re: **Disobedient Diplomats and Other Heroes**

The attached excerpt of an article that appeared in the October 1999 *Foreign Service Journal* provides fascinating historical context to the current controversy over reports that the State Department is recalling the U.S. Ambassador to Armenia for speaking the truth about the Armenian Genocide - a crime against humanity that U.S. diplomats at the time risked their lives to document.

As you know, in recent weeks, Members of Congress have joined with journalists from the Associated Press and other media outlets in asking senior State Department officials about this matter. They are asking, very simply, whether a senior U.S. envoy, John Marshall Evans, is being punished for challenging what effectively amounts to a “gag-rule” - imposed by the Turkish government and enforced by the State Department - on American diplomats speaking honestly about the Armenian Genocide.

The attached excerpt praises Leslie Davis, a courageous and principled U.S. Consul serving in the Ottoman Empire during the Armenian Genocide. It appeared in the October 1999 edition of the *Foreign Service Journal*, the publication of the American Foreign Service Association. (You may recall that, according to the Washington Post, AFSA was pressured by the State Department last year into withdrawing its constructive dissent award to Ambassador Evans.)

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Disobedient Diplomats and Other Heroes

By Patrick Allitt - October 1999

[...]

Standing Up To Slaughter

The story of Leslie Davis in Turkey shows how one American diplomat with a well-developed sense of human decency responded courageously to these new conditions. Working as U.S. consul in Kharput, eastern Turkey, Davis witnessed what is now widely recognized as the first genocide of the 20th century, the Turks' massacre of their Armenian population, which took place in 1915 and 1916. Tens of thousands of Armenians were uprooted from their homes and force-marched (without proper clothing, shelter, or food supplies) to the remote, mountainous Kharput region by soldiers. Those who did not starve or collapse on the way were killed there, by club, sword or gun, and their bodies were left unburied on the shores of Lake Goeljuk.

The Turkish government denied the whole affair, and several missionaries and one other diplomat in the area "disappeared" after witnessing some of the atrocities. Davis nevertheless traveled widely throughout the area, rode out to the lake, took photographs of the bodies, which he carefully preserved (at one point hiding them in a well) and documented the massacre in a series of eloquent memoranda. He brought nearly 80 threatened Armenians into the courtyard of his spacious consulate and let them live there throughout the crisis, and he organized an underground railroad to get other Armenians to safety across the Euphrates River and to Russia. He ignored warnings from the Turkish government not to help survivors, even when a 1915 law imposed the death penalty for aiding Armenians, and arranged food supplies to keep them alive, staying on until America's declaration of war against Germany (to which Turkey was allied) in April 1917.

While carrying on this rescue work, Davis upheld the diplomatic formalities, which included periodically entertaining the province's governor, Sabit Bey, who came regularly to the consulate to play bridge (at which he cheated!). Ironically, Davis quite liked the governor, one of the perpetrators of the massacres, and had a low opinion of the Armenians themselves, many of whose customs had dismayed him: "It is not a race one can admire or among whom I should choose to live," he wrote. "Nevertheless, the tragedy is so terrible, that one cannot contemplate it and certainly cannot live in the midst of it without being stirred to the depths of one's nature."

<http://www.afsa.org/fsj/Oct99/DisobedientAllitt.cfm>