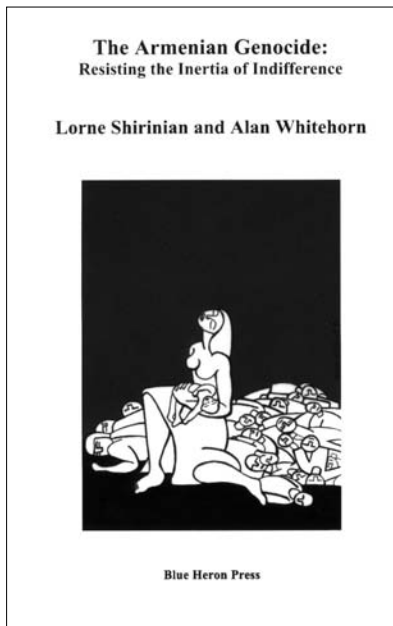


Alan Whitehorn: First J.S. Woodsworth Chair in the Humanities

—Trish Graham



Ominously in 1895-1896, about 200,000 Armenians were massacred. This was to be, however, just a prelude to the state decreed forced deportation, starvation, torture and death of hundreds of thousands of Armenians in 1915 that led to the culmination of about one and a half million dead... In addition to the torture, starvation, disease, and death, homes were confiscated, property stolen, and churches and grave sites destroyed. More importantly and traumatically, a generation of children were killed or orphaned. An entire people were at peril—this is to say they were the victims of genocide...

In contrast to German actions in the post-war era, Turkey, in the main, was more successful in resisting post-WW1 efforts at occupation and intervention by European powers. As a result, it was not forced by foreign powers to deal in any sustained major way with its past genocidal deeds, nor did it foster a flourishing democratic and pluralistic culture. Right up to the contemporary era, Turkish politics have been characterized by political repression, censorship, banning of political parties, and military coups or

From 1994–1996 Alan Whitehorn was the first holder of the J.S. Woodsworth Chair in the Humanities at Simon Fraser University. During his stay at Simon Fraser University, Professor Whitehorn taught six undergraduate courses in the Humanities, appeared regularly in the local media, spoke in the community and at Simon Fraser University, and organized several public events on themes related to “Problems and Prospects of Social Democracy” and “Women in Politics.” These public events brought many distinguished speakers in the social democratic movement from across Canada to audiences at Simon Fraser University and in greater Vancouver.

Among Alan Whitehorn’s most recent publications are Party Politics in Canada (Prentice Hall/Pearson Education, 2000) co-edited with Hugh G. Thorburn, and The Armenian Genocide: Resisting the Inertia of Indifference (Blue Heron Press, 2001) with co-author Lorne Shirinian. Professor of Political Science at the Royal Military College of Canada in Kingston, Ontario, and cross-appointed professor at Queen’s University, Alan Whitehorn is currently working on a book introducing children to international politics.

From “The Armenian Genocide: A Canadian Perspective,” The Armenian Genocide, Resisting the Inertia of Indifference

threats of military intervention...

One ray of hope on the Turkish domestic front is that with increased emigration (and contact with other cultures), greater public access (e.g. through the Internet) to more diverse information, and with the passage of time, it is more likely that a new generation willing to challenge the wall of genocidal denial (e.g. the Turkish researcher, Taner Akcam)... will emerge to foster the path of greater academic freedom, democratization, and the emergence of a civil society...

If it is deemed morally necessary to send dedicated and brave Canadian peacekeepers abroad to be in harm’s way in an effort to try to stop ethnic slaughter and genocide in diverse locales around the globe, then surely it is incumbent upon the Canadian government not to undermine the moral and logical basis of these important commitments of our citizen/soldiers. We cannot and should not put forward two morally contradictory statements:

1) that human rights of an ethnic people matter today and genocide must be stopped even at the risk to

Canadian lives; while also saying 2) that human rights of an ethnic people did not matter in the past and we should forget history and focus instead on new trade deals with governments who engage in genocide denial. To allow the latter position to prevail profoundly undercuts our moral and human commitment to peacekeeping and international law. We should not say one genocide counts, while another does not. We either are a world where each individual and each ethnic group have human rights as enunciated in the UN Charter, the UN Declaration of Human Rights and the UN International Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. Or these principles do not yet prevail and the vision of justice and equality within the world community remain unfulfilled.