

(Pencil drawing of a person)

U.S. Resolution on Armenians Angers Turks

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ANKARA, Turkey, Oct. 28 — The Turkish editorial cartoon may not have been a model of subtlety, but it made its point clearly.

There in the illustration stood a cowboy in a 10-gallon hat, a smoking rifle in his hands and a booted left foot planted firmly on the corpse of an American Indian. While he lingered defiantly over his victim, the cowboy sang a ballad about "Armenian genocide."

Moral: The United States is hardly in a position to give lectures about the horrors of mass killings.

The cartoon reflects a widespread

anger here over a resolution making its way through the United States Senate to proclaim a national day of remembrance for the widespread killings of Armenians at the hands of Ottoman Turks during World War I.

What especially outrages many Turks is the resolution's characterization of the killings as genocide. They complain that it unfairly reinforces a common — and, they insist, mistaken — view that Turks rank among the great butchers of the 20th century.

For decades, Armenians have asserted that 1.5 million of their countrymen were slain or allowed to die of starvation in a Turkish genocidal cam-

paign begun in the spring of 1915. Turkish historians and officials maintain that the number of deaths was closer to 300,000 and that there was no deliberate extermination program but rather random violence on all sides at a time of great turbulence, as a world war raged and the Ottoman Empire was collapsing. If anything, they say, an even larger number of Turkish Muslims were killed by Armenians.

To make clear their displeasure, Government officials threaten reprisals if the Senate passes the resolution, which has already cleared the Judiciary Committee. As a warning, they have begun to restrict American mili-

tary movements, and say they are prepared to scrap a security agreement, up for renewal next year, that gives the United States the use of military bases and surveillance outposts here.

"Turkey-bashing is a popular sport," said Tugay Ozceri, the No. 2 official in the Foreign Ministry. "If that resolution clears Congress, United States-Turkey relations will be dramatically marred." The American Embassy in Ankara agrees, and it has sent an unusual letter to Americans living in Turkey expressing the Bush Administration's opposition to the Senate bill and urging that attention be paid to Turkish sensibilities. But that has not mollified Turkish officials, who accuse the Administration of slowness to act.

This is not the first such Congressional resolution, but it has gone further than most, in part because it has

53 sponsors and because its chief supporter is the Senate minority leader, Bob Dole. The bill would designate next April 24 as a "national day of remembrance of the 75th anniversary of the Armenian genocide of 1915-23."

Deportations in 1915

In the spring of 1915, the Ottoman Empire began to deport hundreds of thousands of Turkish Armenians, who were openly sympathetic to the Allied powers opposing the Turks and other nations. April 24 was the date of a major roundup in 1915. Countless thousands perished from beatings or shootings or from deprivation on the journey to a desert in what is now Syria.

Besides believing that the word "genocide" is loaded, Turks object to the dates in the resolution. They extend well beyond the end of World War I in

1918, to the final dissolution of the Ottoman Empire and the creation of the modern Turkish republic in 1923.

"It goes to the foundation of the present Turkish state," a Western diplomat said. "It tells them that their state was founded on a mass crime."

Among the more outspoken critics of Washington is a member of Parliament from the opposition Social Democratic Populist Party, who, following the cartoonist's lead, proposes that a monument be built in Ankara to the American Indian.

"The so-called Armenian genocide has not been established as a historical fact," the lawmaker, Istemihan Talay, said. "But there is no doubt about the crime against humanity committed by the Americans who massacred the Indians."