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**DR. LAYCOCK DISCUSSES CONTRADICTIONS IN BRITISH POLICY TOWARD
ARMENIA AND ARMENIANS**

Dr. Joanne Laycock, historian who has studied British responses to Armenian issues during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, presented two public lectures in early April to present her findings.

Dr. Laycock is Manoogian Simone Foundation Post-doctoral Fellow at the Armenian Studies Program, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.

On April 3, Dr. Laycock discussed British responses to the Armenian Refugee Crisis, 1918-1925 at the International Institute of the University of Michigan. Her second lecture, "British Encounters with Armenia in the 19th Century," co-sponsored by the Armenian Research Center, University of Michigan-Dearborn, was presented on April 7 in Southfield, Michigan, in the lecture hall of St. John Armenian Church.

In both lectures Dr. Laycock unraveled the contradictory nature of British attitudes toward Armenia and Armenians during times when the British Empire was a dominating world power and when critical events were happening in Armenian history.

Discussing the early period of contact with Armenians, the British on the one hand recognized Armenians as a fellow Christian people, "last bastions of the Christian faith" in the region, and appreciated the ruins of Ani and other architectural sites; and, on the other hand, they characterized Armenians in the provinces as "primitive," and the Armenian Church as "superstitious and backward." For the British, Armenia may be timeless but "civilization had moved West," and there had been no progress or change in the land. "Eastern invasions had subdued the Armenians and turned them into a slavish people." Nonetheless, argued Dr. Laycock, a strong pro-Armenian movement developed, a movement that tried to reconcile these contradictory perceptions into a policy that might help Armenians in the Ottoman Empire.

The theme of contradictory attitudes was also the subject of Dr. Laycock's lecture on the refugee crisis. During the First World War, she argued, the slaughter of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire was a major topic for the government and people of the British Empire,

especially considering the reservoir of sympathy from earlier periods. But these tragic events were also used by the British Government as a propaganda tool against the German-Austrian-Ottoman alliance. When the war ended the British, controlling Iraq, established orphanages. Dr. Laycock displayed wrenching photos of Armenian refugee camps in Basra, Baquba and Mosul not seen publicly before (courtesy of the Nubarian Library in Paris).

Yet, argued the lecturer, earlier characterizations of Armenians returned when the caretakers of the orphanages looked upon the orphans as a problem, “half-civilized” and when “Armenians” became “a problem of their own,” “oriental,” “Eastern.”

Both lectures were followed by a lively period of comments and of questions and answers. In response to a critic in the audience who considered British policies duplicitous, Dr. Laycock answered, “I cannot begin to apologize for these policies,” although she clearly was not responsible for them personally.

In addition to covering the British Armenophile movement and response to the Armenian Genocide, the Armenian refugee relief post WWI, and British travel writing on Armenia, Dr. Laycock is currently working on Soviet Armenian history, especially with regards to the repatriation to Armenia and homeland-Diaspora relations.

Dr. Joanne Laycock received her doctorate in history from Manchester University in 2005 and has, since then, published a number of important studies in collected essays. As a Post-doctoral Fellow at the Armenian Studies Program at the University of Michigan, Dr. Laycock is working on new studies in her area of specialization.

Her book on Britain and Armenia *Imagining Armenia: Orientalism, Ambiguity and Intervention*, will be published by MUP this autumn.