

# REVIEW OF ARMENIAN STUDIES

A QUARTERLY JOURNAL OF HISTORY,  
POLITICS AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

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## CONTENTS

Editorial Note

## ARTICLES

*Facts and Comments*

Ömer E. LÜTEM

*The First Shot*

Prof. Justin MCCARTHY

*Some Abstracts from the Mormon Missionaries About the Turks and Armenians*

Prof. Dr. Seçil KARAL - AKGÜN

*The Implied Message of Ararat and its Intended Audience*

Prof. Dr. Nedret KURAN – BURÇOĞLU

*On the Assassination of Van Mayor Kapamacıyan by the Tashnak Committee*

Dr. Hasan OKTAY

*Armenian Foreign Policy: Basic Parameters of the Ter-Petrosian and Kocharian Era*

Assist. Prof. Dr. Kamer KASIM

## INTERVIEWS

## CONFERENCES

## BOOK REVIEWS

## RECENT BOOKS

## DOCUMENTS

## INDEX



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## CONTENTS

	Page:
<b>Editorial Note</b> .....	5
<b>ARTICLES</b>	
<i>Facts and Comments</i> .....	7
<b>Ömer E. LÜTEM</b>	
<i>The First Shot</i> .....	28
<b>Prof. Justin MCCARTHY</b>	
<i>Some Abstracts from the Mormon Missionaries about the Turks and Armenians</i> .....	52
<b>Prof. Dr. Seçil KARAL - AKGÜN</b>	
<i>The Implied Message of Ararat and its Intended Audience</i> .....	65
<b>Prof. Dr. Nedret KURAN – BURÇOĞLU</b>	
<i>On the Assassination of Van Mayor Kapamacıyan by the Tashnak Committee</i> .....	79
<b>Dr. Hasan OKTAY</b>	
<i>Armenian Foreign Policy: Basic Parameters of the Ter Petrosian and Kocharian Era</i> .....	90
<b>Assist. Prof. Dr. Kamer KASIM</b>	
<b>INTERVIEWS</b> .....	104
<b>CONFERENCES</b> .....	120
<b>BOOK REVIEWS</b> .....	126
<b>RECENT BOOKS</b> .....	140
<b>DOCUMENTS</b> .....	145
<b>INDEX</b> .....	160

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## EDITORIAL NOTE

**I**nstitute for Armenian Research, publisher of the bilingual quarterly *Ermeni Arařtırmaları/Armenian Studies*, considering that nearly half of the last issues of the journal is formed by articles in English, decided to publish a separate journal in English naming it **Review of Armenian Studies**.

Review of Armenian Studies which intends to reach not only Turkish readers and provide them with scholarly views on Armenian matters, will not be merely a translated version of the Turkish *Ermeni Arařtırmaları* although some articles will be published in both journals.

The first article of this first issue is the Editor's **Facts and Comments** which summarizes and comments the main events of the last three months concerning Armenia, the Armenian question and Armenians emphasizing the Turkish-Armenian relations.

Prof. Dr. Justin McCarthy in his article "**The First Shot**" proves that the Turks did not start the long conflict with the Armenians but it was Armenians who in 1796, 1828, 1878, 1890 s, 1909, 1915 and 1919 (dates that are crucial in this conflict) allied themselves with the enemy or rebelled or attacked Turks.

Prof. Dr. Seil Karal-Akgn, in "**Some Abstracts From the Mormon Missionaries About the Turks and Armenians**" explains not well-known activities of the Mormon missionaries in the Ottoman Empire. It is interesting that they did not share the anti-Turk assertions of the Protestant missionaries.

Prof. Dr. Nedret Kuran-Burođlu's "**The Implied Message of Ararat and its Intended Audience**" analyses the image creating, stereotyping and image propagating methods and mechanisms of this movie.

In the article "**On the Assassination of Van Mayor Kapamajian by the Tashnak Committee**" Dr. Hasan Oktay reveals that Ottomans appointed also Armenian mayors. In case of Kapamajian, who gained the esteem of both Muslims and

Armenians in Van, Tashnaks did not hesitate to murder him because he did not serve their interests.

Assis.Prof. Dr. Kamer Kasım's article entitled "**Armenian Foreign Policy: Basic Parameters of the Ter Petrosian and Kocharian Era**" analyses different approaches of the two Armenian presidents mainly to the Karabakh issue and relations with Turkey.

We are publishing in this issue two **interviews** of the Institute for Armenian Research members which appeared earlier in the Turkish press. The first one is with the Director of the Institute and concerns main Armenian issues. The second one is with Assist. Prof. Dr. Sedat Laçiner and Şenol Kantarcı, authors of the book entitled "Ararat: Armenian Artistic Propaganda".

Witnessing the ever growing interest in Turkey for Armenian studies three important scientific meetings took place in March, April and May of this year. These are **The 81. Anniversary of Talat Pasha's Assassination: A Look on International Terrorism in İstanbul, Turkish Congress on Armenian Studies** in Ankara and **International Symposium of Armenian Problem in Turkey** in Manisa. In the section "**Conferences**" concise information is given on these meetings.

This issue of the journal contains also **book reviews**, information about **recent books**, the texts of some **documents** concerning recent events and an **index** of the first four issues of the bilingual *Ermeni Araştırmaları/ Armenian Studies*.

With best wishes

The Editor

# FACTS AND COMMENTS

Ömer Lütem\*

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## 1. Turkish Congress on Armenian Studies

**I**nstitute for Armenian Research has organized a "Turkish Congress on Armenian Studies" on 20-21 April, 2002 in Ankara, under the high auspices of President Ahmet Necdet Sezer. The Congress aimed at getting together scholars and other authors in Turkey studying Armenian question, Armenians and Armenia, to discuss different aspects of these themes and to adopt a declaration containing common views. This was the greatest organization of its kind in Turkey with regard to the number of participants and presentations. And considering the number of the presentations separately, the Congress, probably, set a world record. The success of the Congress indicated the great interest for Armenian research in Turkey.

**The Congress aimed at getting together scholars and other authors in Turkey studying Armenian question, Armenians and Armenia.**

There is an article with detailed information about the Congress in this issue of the journal.<sup>1</sup> This issue includes also the subjects of the presentations, their authors and the full text of the declaration of the Congress.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, the texts of the presentations are to be published later as a book.

## 2. The 81st Anniversary of Talat Pasha's Assassination: A Look on International Terror

The symposium organized by the Institute for Armenian Research together with Istanbul University on 15 March, 2002 in

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\* Director of Institute for Armenian Research.

<sup>1</sup> See, pp. 120-122.

<sup>2</sup> See, pp. 154-157.



**Dr. Sedat Laçiner and Şenol Kantarcı, two scholars of the Institute for Armenian Research, undertook an in-depth analysis of the movie.**

Pera Palas Hotel in Istanbul, under the auspices of the Minister of Culture Mr. İstemihan Talay, was attended by five Turkish and six foreign scholars.

This symposium is being analyzed in a separate article in this issue of the journal.<sup>3</sup>

Again, the presentations are going to be published later as a book.

Besides the originality of the presentations submitted, another aspect of the symposium drawing attention was the number of the foreign participants which exceeded that of the Turkish ones, and that some of the former spoke for the first time on this topic. It seems that developments with regard to Armenian question in recent years stimulate the study of the issue not only among the Turkish scholars but foreign ones as well.

### 3. The Movie "Ararat"

"Ararat" movie directed by Atom Egoyan, a citizen of Canada of Armenian origin and famous with his art movies, whose topic was the so-called Armenian genocide, incited a debate in the Turkish press.<sup>4</sup> Assist. Prof. Dr. Sedat Laçiner and Şenol Kantarcı, two scholars of the Institute for Armenian Research, undertook an in-depth analysis of the movie based on the scenario of the movie, which consequently has been published as a book with the title, "Ararat: Sanatsal Ermeni Propagandası" (Ararat: Armenian Artistic Propaganda). The book analyses the movie with regard to its topic, aim, the messages it tries to disseminate, the symbols it utilizes, its finance, the support extended from Armenia, its director and actors. Moreover, it sheds light on how the Armenians use cinema as a tool of propaganda, drawing on the examples from other anti-Turkish movies. At the same time, the authors compare the events taken from the movie with the real ones and conclude how far from reality the former are. Though Egoyan claims that considering historical events he relied on "An American Physician in Turkey", the book written by Clarence Ussher, an American missionary, that

<sup>3</sup> See, pp. 124-126.

<sup>4</sup> On this topic see Sedat Laçiner "Ararat Filmi ve Türk Basını: Eleştirel Bir Değerlendirme", (The Film Ararat and Turkish Media: A Critical Analysis) Armenian Studies No:5, pp. 48-83.

the main scenes of horror in the movie have nothing to do with the book, reveals that Egoyan fabricated a great deal. In short, the book clearly shows that the movie "Ararat" has been produced for the sole purpose of propaganda.

Taking the movie to the Cannes Film Festival with the hope of getting an award, Egoyan withdrew it finding that there wasn't such a possibility, and displaying it out of the contest. The movie didn't succeed in securing positive critiques. The reason behind seems to be the ambiguous and arduous manner of expression and that it was not convincing enough.

#### **4. The Commemoration of the Martyrs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs**

The Turkish officials martyred by the Armenian terrorists while on duty abroad were commemorated by a usual ceremony on 30 May, 2002 in Cebeci Cemetery, in the Graveyard of Martyrs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (*Dışişleri Şehitliği*).

The ceremony was attended by a crowd including the families of the martyrs and all the staff of Institute for Armenian Research, speeches were delivered by a young official from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Director of Institute for Armenian Research, retired ambassador Ömer E. Lütem, the Minister of National Defense Mr. Sabahattin Çakmakoglu, and the Minister of Foreign Affairs Mr. Ismail Cem respectively. Moreover, the messages sent by President Mr. Ahmet Necdet Sezer and Prime Minister Mr. Bülent Ecevit were read.<sup>5</sup>

#### **5. Presidential Elections in France and Armenian Question**

The presidential elections in France was taken as an opportunity by the Armenian militants to air their demands. *Comité de la défense de la cause arménienne* (Committee for the Defense of the Armenian Cause) has sent letters to the candidates with five questions asking for answers.<sup>6</sup>

Jacques Chirac, emphasizing the recognition of the Armenian "genocide" by the French Parliament, did not answer clearly the first question on what he thought about taking measures to

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<sup>5</sup> The texts of the speeches and messages are in the documentary section of the journal.

<sup>6</sup> For the questions and answers we relied on *La Lettre de L'UGAB* 17 April 2002.

**A detente in the region  
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development of  
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the question unanswered.

It becomes clear that in the face of the lack of a clause of coercion regarding those who do not take the 1915 events as amounting to genocide in the French Law on the recognition of the so-called Armenian genocide,<sup>7</sup> the Armenian militants in France have concentrated all their efforts in this direction. Yet the silence of newly elected Jacques Chirac on this issue appears far from promising for the Armenians. However, it would be wise to take it for granted that this demand will come to the fore at every occasion.

Though President Chirac answered to the second question on the conditions of Turkey's acceptance to the European Union mentioning the Copenhagen Criteria, ex-Prime Minister Jospin added to the criteria the recognition of the Armenian "genocide" as well. As to Jean-Marie Le Pen, he considered the job done by expressing that he was against Turkey's membership on the ground of its being "an Asiatic country".

President Chirac, after the third question on the Karabakh problem responded to the forth one on the "embargo" applied by Azerbaijan and Turkey, in an indirect way, saying that a detente in the region and especially between Armenia and Turkey would help to the establishment and the development of commercial relations.

It was President Chirac that put the most interesting answer to the last question on the preservation of Armenian culture and identity. He expressed his wish for the establishment of an Armenian cultural institution in France if elected, reminding that he had already been engaged in the efforts to strengthen a cathedral in Ani for a long time. This gave the impression that the

<sup>7</sup> See, *Armenian Studies*, Vol.1, No 1, 2001, pp. 20, 21.

French President is engaged in a good deal of service to the Armenians. It is difficult, however, to think that a new cultural institution will bring benefit to Armenians, who already utilize in France all the opportunities in all the spheres to the greatest possible extent.

As has been indicated above, the Armenian militants sought to utilize the presidential elections to put forward their demands. Ex-Prime Minister Jospin who was the outstanding candidate in terms of heeding the Armenian demands, failed to pass to the second stage, Le Pen who was successful in this regard, was rather indifferent to that demands, and the reelected Jacques Chirac, though resorting to phrases like "one of the most terrible crimes of the past century" about the so-called Armenian genocide, and speaking of the impossibility of the revision of history having in mind Turkey, he too parried Armenian militants' demands, save for the not-so-useful Armenian cultural institute.

Although the stands taken by the French presidential candidates didn't reverberate in Turkey to a significant degree, some of the ministers in the French government, formed following the election, received negative reaction from the Turkish media.<sup>8</sup>

The Minister for European Affairs Renaud Donnadiou, sorely criticizing Turkey's acceptance as a candidate to the European Union, submitted a motion of investigation to the parliament. Explaining why he was against the candidacy of Turkey, he mentioned the so-called Armenian genocide, besides claiming that Turkey was not in line with the nature of Europe.<sup>9</sup>

The Deputy Minister for Local Liberties Patrick Devedjian has been known for his exceedingly negative attitudes towards Turkey and the Turks. He undertook the advocacy of all the Armenians arrested in France, who had tried to assassinate Turkish diplomats. He was one of the architects of the law on the Armenian "genocide" adopted in France in the last year. He was the lawyer of some mafia members and provided one of them with a gun.<sup>10</sup> It seems that he owes his position within the Republican Unity Party that gathered the supporters of De Gaulle, to Jacques Chirac, of

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<sup>8</sup> 9 Mayıs 2002 tarihli Radikal: "Fransız Hükümeti Tatsız" (French Government is not delighted), *Radikal*, May 9 2002; "Türk Karşıtları Yeni Hükümette" (Turkey opposers at the new government), *Hürriyet*, 9 May 2002; "Fransız Kabinesi Türk Düşmanı Dolu", (French Cabinet is full of Anti-Turks) *Akşam*, 9 May 2002.

<sup>9</sup> *Radikal*, 9 May 2002.

<sup>10</sup> *Akşam*, 7 May 2002.

**Though it has been for about a year and a half that France has adopted the law recognizing the so-called Armenian genocide, direct and indirect problems continue to permeate the relations between France and Turkey.**

whom he was a personal lawyer. Though Devedjian hoped for the post of the minister of justice<sup>12</sup> probably his connections with the mafia became an obstacle on the way.

During this period one more incident affected Turkish-French relations negatively. Journalists Without Borders placing "a map of the countries that suppress freedom of press"

in the railway station Saint Lazarre in Paris, located the photo of Turkish Chief of General Staff Hüseyin Kıvrıkoğlu on the map of Turkey. The map being tramped by passersby caused a great deal of reaction in Ankara. The General Staff said it will sue the organization and revise the military relations with France, while the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Ambassador Uğur Ziyal demanded from the French ambassador the photo to be removed.<sup>13</sup> The Turkish side found the French response that the railway administration was informed unacceptable, and issued an official release demanding the removal of the photo. Consequently the photo was removed.<sup>14</sup>

As it appears this incident has no direct connection with Armenian question. Yet it was aggravated by the lack of confidence emanated from France's increased support of the Armenian claims for domestic political reason, turning it to a serious problem between the two states. Though it has been for about a year and a half that France has adopted the law recognizing the so-called Armenian genocide, direct and indirect problems continue to permeate the relations between France and Turkey. Adopting this law, France as if added to the Turkish-French relations a kind of Armenian mortgage.

<sup>11</sup> *Libération*, 8 May 2002.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> *Radikal*, 9 May 2002.

<sup>14</sup> Statement by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, No. 62, 10 May 2002.

## 6. A Report by the Swedish Parliament

The Foreign Affairs Commission of the Swedish Parliament prepares regular annual reports on foreign policy and human rights, which after being discussed in the parliament is submitted to the government as the stand of the parliament.

In the report that has been adopted in the parliament, it is stated that the Foreign Affairs Commission has evaluated the motions on the recognition of the Assyrians/ Syrians and Chaldeans "genocides" and the one demanding that Turkey accept the Armenian "genocide"; yet indicating that there isn't an official Swedish view accepting the events during the Ottoman period as amounting to genocide. Pointing to the adoption of the UN Treaty

**There isn't an official Swedish view accepting the events during the Ottoman period as amounting to genocide.**

on Genocide in 1948, the report argues that if it were in force by the time of the events befalling Assyrians/ Syrians and Chaldeans besides the Armenians, perhaps they would have been considered as genocide.<sup>15</sup>

Moreover the report indicated that, the report of the Foreign Affairs Commission of 1999-2000, which referred to an alleged UN decision of 1985 about the genocide that the Armenians suffered, it was found out that neither in 1985 nor in any other date there was no document by the United Nations on the Armenians; and Assyrians/Syrians and Chaldeans.<sup>16</sup>

In addition to this, the Foreign Affairs Commission, expressed that massacres that the Armenians, Assyrians/Syrians and Chaldeans were subject to, have to be openly discussed, which required historical studies, and all the governments including the Turkish one, should encourage, facilitate and open the archives to the scholars.<sup>17</sup>

Though Murad Artin, an MP of Armenian origin and some other parliamentarians tried to insert to the report phrases accusing Turkey, they lost by 89 votes against 209.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>15</sup> A report by the Foreign Affairs Commission of Swedish Parliament , with a sign "2001/02:UU8 Mnskliga rättigheter m.m- inder,omrden, enskilda folkgrupper och vissa FN-frgor."

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> [www.ntvmnsbc.com.tr](http://www.ntvmnsbc.com.tr), 27 March 2002.

These following points concerning the report by the Foreign Affairs Commission and by the Parliament need to be considered:

**A.** Regardless of the claims of the Armenian militants that Sweden recognized the Armenian "genocide", the report states clearly that there is no official Swedish attitude on this issue.

**B.** Moreover that it was expressed that, had the 1948 treaty been in force during the Ottoman period, the events would have "probably" been accepted as genocide, shows that not only the impossibility of retroactivity of the agreement, but also indicates a neutral stand, leaving the discussion open as to whether genocide happened or not.

**C.** A report submitted to Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities by Benjamin Whitaker of English origin in 1985, mentioning genocides cites, after Jews, Armenians as an example. While being discussed in the sub-commission as the Turkish and some other states were opposed to the Armenian example. As a result, according to the procedure the report has not been submitted to a higher office, to Human Rights Commission, according to the procedure, the report has just been "noted". Although the report hasn't been subject to any processing, Armenian militants advertised the event to the world public opinion as the recognition of the Armenian "genocide" by the UN.<sup>19</sup> It was this disinformation that was mentioned in the 1999/2000 report of the Foreign Affairs Commission of the Swedish Parliament and which was corrected this year. In this manner, a foreign parliament proved once more how groundless was the argument on the recognition of the Armenian genocide by the UN.

## **7. Israel and the So-called Armenian Genocide**

Israel's Ambassador to Armenia, Mrs. Rivka Cohen who resides in Tbilisi, Georgia answering a question on the so-called Armenian genocide in a press conference she arranged in Yerevan on Israeli-Armenian relations on February 8, 2002 said that, "Holocaust is a unique phenomenon, since it has been planned and aimed to destroy the whole nation."<sup>20</sup> At this stage nothing should be

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<sup>19</sup> For Whitaker report and views thereon see Türkkaya Ataöv "What Really Happened in Geneva: The Truth About the Whitaker Report", Ankara, 1986.

<sup>20</sup> The phrase unique used here to indicate the only of its kind. Thus it means that the conditions that were the case in the Jewish Holocaust have not been repeated in any other case.

**Holocaust is a unique phenomenon, since it has been planned and aimed to destroy the whole nation. At this stage nothing should be compared with Holocaust.**

compared with Holocaust".<sup>21</sup> Her answer was taken to amount to the denial of the Armenian "genocide" both in Armenia and in Diaspora with the eventual media campaign against her and Israel in general, where there were even those demanding she be declared *persona non grata*.<sup>22</sup>

This event left the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Armenia in a difficult situation, which after a long hesitation eventually decided to issue a protest note to Israel, stating that "the Armenian Foreign Ministry considers unacceptable any attempt to deny or demean the reality of the Armenian Genocide". Moreover it was said that Armenia has never intended to draw parallels between the Armenian Genocide and Jewish Holocaust, believing instead that any crime committed against humanity is unique with its own special political, legal, historical and moral consequences.<sup>23</sup> At the same time, the Speaker of the Foreign Ministry said that a visit of Mr. Oskanian, the Minister of the Foreign Affairs of Armenia to Israel was foreseen but there was no such a plan on the agenda at that stage.<sup>24</sup> The minister himself on a different occasion, complained about the disregard of the moral values by doubting the reality of Armenian genocide for the sake of some political vested interests, and said that he was confident that the time will come when the state of Israel will revise its policy, and this will occur basically as a result of the pressure of the Jewish people.<sup>25</sup>

Israel in its response to the protest note of the Armenian side stated that "Israel acknowledges the tragedy of the Armenians, however, these events can't be compared to a genocide, which does not minimize the greatness of this tragedy."<sup>26</sup> In short, Israel confirmed its official attitude that Armenian relocation didn't

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<sup>21</sup> *Asbarez Online*, 8 February 2002.

<sup>22</sup> Armenian Aryan Parti: *Arminfo*, 11 February 2002; and journalist Sasunyan: *California Courier Online*, 14 February 2002.

<sup>23</sup> A press release by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Armenia, 15 February 2002.

<sup>24</sup> *Armenpress News Agency*, 15 February 2002.

<sup>25</sup> *Noyan Tapan News Agency*, 20 February 2002.

<sup>26</sup> *Arminfo*, 20 February 2002.



amount to genocide, which had been expressed earlier by Minister of Foreign Affairs of Israel Shimon Perez while he had visited Turkey in April last year, who said that: "We reject attempts to create a similarity between the Holocaust and the Armenian tragedy. Nothing similar to the Holocaust occurred. It's a tragedy what the Armenians experienced but not genocide. This issue should be dealt with by historians and we do not support the comparison of the Armenian tragedies to Jewish Holocaust."<sup>27</sup>

Though this is the official view of Israel, some Jewish scholars appear to be of a different opinion. To those convinced in the "uniqueness" of the Holocaust like the official view, some others argue that there have been other holocausts and considering the relocations of 1915 a genocide.<sup>28</sup>

Some of these put forward their views in a declaration released last August: "We, the undersigned, are scholars, rabbis, teachers, community leaders, and students of Jewish heritage. As Jews, we share many similarities with the Armenian people. We were both victims of genocide during the twentieth-century and have survived despite those who would deny us our right to exist. On this year, 2001, which marks the 1700<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Armenia's adoption of Christianity, we as Jews salute our Armenian friends and their contributions to Western society and culture."<sup>29</sup>

This declaration was signed by 54 famous Jews, including 13 professors and 8 rabbies. The works of some of these authors can be found in the footnote.<sup>30</sup>

The activities of two persons draw special attention in this regard: Mr Israel W. Charny, Executive Director of the Holocaust and Genocide institute in Jerusalem and editor of the Encyclopedia of Genocide and Mr. Yair Auron the author of the book titled "Banality of Indifference: Zionism and the Armenian Genocide" and a member of the Armenian Zoryan Institute in the United States. These two persons who are in a constant activity for

<sup>27</sup> *Asbarez Daily*, 13 April 2002.

<sup>28</sup> For Israeli view on the difference between Armenian events and holocaust see Ibrahim Kaya, "The Holocaust and Armenian Case: Highlighting the Main Differences", *Armenian Studies*, No. 4, p.274.

<sup>29</sup> *Azg Daily*, 7 September 2001.

<sup>30</sup> Robert Melson: *Revolution and Genocide. On the Origins of the Armenian Genocide and the Holocaust*; Daniel Jonah Goldhagen: *Hitler's Willing Executioners. Ordinary German and the Holocaust*; Efraim Karsh : *Empire of the Sand. The Struggle for Mastery in the Middle East (1789-1923)*; Robert Jay Lifton : *The Nazi Doctors. Medical Killing and the Psychology of Genocide*; Deborah Lipstadt: *Denying Genocide. The Growing Assault on Truth and Memory*.

**Armenians are well aware of the advantages that good relations with Israel may bring.**

the Armenian "genocide" to be recognized, following the aforementioned statements of Mrs. Rivka Cohen, sent protest letters to the Israeli government.<sup>31</sup>

Despite some renowned Jews thinking and acting in line with the Armenians, the official Israeli view should be taken to be the valid one. Moreover if to add the strategic value that Israel attributes to Turkey, it can be said that at this stage there is no possibility that Israel will recognize the so-called genocide.

Armenians are well aware of the advantages that good relations with Israel may bring and are spending a good deal of effort to this end. Yet, as the event associated with Mrs. Rivka Cohen proved, being overemotional with regard to the so-called genocide issue, they sometimes overreact causing results hardly favorable to themselves, like forcing the Israeli Government to confirm their refusal of the Armenian "genocide" with a verbal note.

#### **8. The So-called Armenian Genocide and Switzerland**

There had been a number of futile attempts to make the Parliament of Switzerland recognize the so-called Armenian genocide. Yet on 13 March, 2001 as the last initiative was unsuccessful only by a very narrow margin of votes by 73 to 70, it was expected that the attempt would be renewed with a greater chance to be successful.<sup>32</sup>

The expectation became true in a shorter time, with the issue raised again in the Parliament of Switzerland. A parliamentarian from Geneva, Jean-Claude Vaudroz submitted to the Parliament a resolution on 20 March, 2002 which read: "The National Council (parliament) recognize the Armenian Genocide of 1915. It asks the government, to take notice of this recognition and to convey it through the regular diplomatic channels."<sup>33</sup>

The motion was signed by 115 MPs out of the total 201 members of the Parliament. That the text didn't carry binding

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<sup>31</sup> For the texts of these letters see *Armenian National Institute*, 7 March 2002; Zoryan Institute of Canada, 6 March 2002.

<sup>32</sup> *Armenian Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 2001, pp. 38,39

<sup>33</sup> Press Release, *Association Switzerland-Armenia*, 20 March 2002.

clauses as regarded the government of Switzerland, didn't mention Turkey or Turks, and didn't include phrases of condemnation seem to be main reasons for the success of the initiative. Since with such features they might have thought that Turkey would not object stiffly. In fact, the author of the resolution, Jean-Claude Vaudroz said that the decision didn't target the Republic of Turkey. Yet though not expressed explicitly, it is clear that a reference in the resolution comes down to Turkey and Turks. Moreover, it is doubtless that if adopted the resolution will be utilized by Armenians against Turkey.

After a few days of the submission of the resolution in question to the Swiss Parliament, while in his official visit to Turkey the Minister of Economy of Switzerland Pascal Couchepain sought to downplay the importance of the issue, saying that "it was only a statement" and that "we are aware of the Turkish public opinion's sensibilities on the issue. I think that the issue should be left to historians and not to political bodies". He went on claiming that "members of parliament generally sign various propositions without really knowing their content."<sup>34</sup> According to the Minister of Foreign affairs of Switzerland, Joseph Deis, though the Parliament wanted to adopt a resolution which has nothing to do with the government, the relations between the two states were strong enough to overcome such difficulties.<sup>35</sup>

According to press<sup>36</sup> the government of Switzerland, in an advisory letter sent to the parliament of the country, stated it had better the issue was left to the historians to resolve and that in case this resolution was adopted that would affect Turkish-Armenian relations negatively. Thus the government has warned the parliament.

On the other hand, the cases of 12 Turks that denied the Armenian "genocide" and acquitted<sup>37</sup> yet were appealed finished. The higher court ruled that such cases couldn't be appealed by private persons (those who appealed were two Armenians), relying on procedural law.<sup>38</sup> If the parliament of Switzerland had adopted a resolution recognizing the so called Armenian genocide, the

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<sup>34</sup> *Agence France Presse*, 26 March 2002.

<sup>35</sup> *Turkish Daily News*, 29 March 2002,

<sup>36</sup> *Hürriyet*, 25 May 2002.

<sup>37</sup> *Ermeni Araştırmaları*, No. 3, pp. 16, 17.

<sup>38</sup> Press Release, *Association Switzerland-Armenia*, 18 April 2002.

**In almost all the countries of the world with an Armenian minority, various ceremonies and organizations have been organized.**

persons with actions and statements amounting to the denial of this "genocide" would have to be punished by the related clauses of Swiss Criminal Law. In this way, the adoption of such a resolution will be more than a "mere declaration", carrying judicial

consequences.

### **9- Commemoration of 24 April Activities in Various Countries**

April 24<sup>th</sup> has been commemorated both in Armenia and in Diaspora with usual meetings and ceremonies.

The main activities in Armenia were the march to the monument of "genocide", a ceremony here and a religious liturgy organized in Echmiadzin.<sup>39</sup> President Kocharian in his speech argued that all the Armenians in the world were awaiting the recognition and condemnation of this crime committed against humanity not because of the wish to take revenge but to prevent similar crimes.<sup>40</sup>

In a march organized in evening with torches, a Turkish flag has been burned.<sup>41</sup>

In almost all the countries of the world with an Armenian minority, various ceremonies and organizations have been organized, the outstanding ones of which were in the United States, France, Lebanon and Greece.

The message that the President of the United States released on the occasion of 24<sup>th</sup> of April drew attention as it is the case every year. Armenians of the United States tried to exert pressure on the President to get the word "genocide" be included in the message. The most significant of such endeavors was that initiated by members of the Congress, Joe Knollenberg and Frank Pallone, who invited the other members to sign a letter to be sent to the President.

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<sup>39</sup> Press Release, *Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin*, 25 April 2002.

<sup>40</sup> *Agence France Presse*, 24 April 2002.

<sup>41</sup> *Reuters*, 24 April 2002.

**President Bush resorted to such phrases as massacre, murder and horrific killings, however didn't mention "genocide".**

To summarize, the letter, referring to the September 11 terrorist attack, reminds those subjected to violence and mass massacres in preceding years, points to the treacherous murder of 1.5 million Armenians in the Ottoman Empire, and argues that to prevent future genocides the Armenian "genocide" should be understood properly. President Bush was reminded also of his promises in 2000 (before election),<sup>42</sup> with the consequent demand that he uses the word "genocide" this year.<sup>43</sup>

Being signed by 162 members of the Congress the letter was sent to the President.<sup>44</sup> Though there has been an increase of about 30 compared to the previous one, if to consider the whole of the American Congress (535 in total: 435 in the House of Representatives and 100 in Senate) it expressed the will of just % 30 of the institution. This proportion was not great enough to make President Bush change his mind, especially when the next election was three years away.

In his message on 24 April President Bush resorted to such phrases as massacre, murder and horrific killings, however didn't mention "genocide".<sup>45</sup> To alleviate the expected disappointment of the Armenians, he added that he looked forward to Turkey's restoration of economic, political and cultural links with Armenia. Moreover, he praised Armenians for their contribution to the national life of America, and expressed gratitude to Armenia for its cooperation in the struggle against international terrorism. He still emphasized the support Armenia extended to the American nation after September 11. What was interesting in this regard was that, apart from opening its air space to some of the planes destined to Afghanistan, Armenia did nothing that can be counted as a support in the fight against terror. Far from truth President Bush's remarks were, they should certainly as regarded appealed to the Armenain pride.

<sup>42</sup> *Armenian Studies*, No. 1, pp. 39, 40.

<sup>43</sup> *Armenian Assembly of America*, Press Release, 5 March 2001.

<sup>44</sup> *Armenian National Committee of America*, Press Release, 15 April 2002.

<sup>45</sup> For the full text of the message see *Armenian National Committee of America*, Press Release, 24 April 2002.

In the message there have been two points that concern Turkey very much. The first is about the event of relocation. The President spoke of "the massacre of as many as 1.5 million Armenians through forced exile and murder at the end of the Ottoman Empire". Yet the historical records are clear that the number of Armenians in the whole Ottoman Empire was below 1,5 millions. Moreover, though it is true that Armenians were forced to migrate, that they were subjected to mass killings doesn't hold true. Such phrases by the President run counter to the views and beliefs of the Turkish state, scholars and public opinion, and diminishes the assets that he gained by avoiding the word "genocide".

As to the President's words regarding his expectations that Turkey reestablish economic, political and cultural relations with Armenia, these reflect the views of the Armenians in "establishing relations with Turkey unconditionally". To establish diplomatic relations with Armenia unconditionally means letting them go on claiming about "genocide", invading Karabakh and other Azerbaijani territories and refusing to recognize Turkey's territorial integrity and inviolability of its borders. That's why an unconditional establishment of diplomatic relations means disregarding the Turkish interests.

American President's calling for the establishment of relations between Turkey and Armenia is due to the great importance that the United States, for strategic reasons attributes to peace in the Caucasus. This stand is correct as a principle. What is wrong is that demands are directed solely towards Turkey. As it is Armenia's attitudes and policies that are behind all the problems existing in the South Caucasus. To try to resolve the problems, the first state to start with is Armenia.

During the period under review six<sup>46</sup> American federated states adopted resolutions recognizing the so-called Armenian genocide.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> As of late May 2002 these states are: California, Colorado, New Jersey, New York, Rhode Island and Wisconsin.

<sup>47</sup> As of late May 2002 27 states recognizing the so-called Armenian genocide are (Numbers indicate how many times it was recognized): Alaska (2), Arizona (1), Arkansas (1), California (17), Colorado (5), Connecticut (2), Florida (1), Georgia (1), Illinois (6), Maine (2), Maryland (4), Massachusetts (3), Michigan (5), Minnesota (1), Nevada (1), New Hampshire (1), New Jersey (5), New Mexico (1), New York (10), Oklahoma (1), Oregon (1), Pennsylvania (6), Rhode Island (12), South Carolina (1), Virginia (4), Washington (1), Wisconsin (4).

**The common feature of the resolutions is that they are overridden with faults as the texts presented by Armenians are adopted without almost any investigation.**

to take decisions of the similar nature, and such demands could be repeated each year. For instance, in California densely populated by Armenians, though one decision on this subject would be enough logically, there have been 17 on the recognition and commemoration of the so-called Armenian genocide.

The common feature of the resolutions is that they are overridden with faults as the texts presented by Armenians are adopted without almost any investigation whatsoever. For example, in a resolution being adopted in Rhode Island's House of Representatives and Senate separately on 24 April, 2002, it was stated that the so-called Armenian genocide had been recognized by the United Nations, the European Council and Great Britain; which doesn't hold true.

Moreover, in a resolution by Wisconsin Senate on 20 February, 2002 it is stated that, "Government of Turkey denies its Armenian community religious freedom, the right to control its own schools, the right to teach its children its own language, and the right to express its ethnic identity"; this too has nothing to do with reality. Before deciding on that kind of issue it would be proper to investigate the real situation in Turkey, for example, by appealing to the Armenian Patriarchate in Istanbul.

### **10. Armenia: A Law Against the Deniers of the So-called Armenian Genocide**

"Agricultural-Industrial Popular Unity", one of the fractions in the Armenian Parliament, submitted a draft law to protect the memories of the victims of the Armenian "genocide" in the Ottoman Turkey between 1915-1923. The draft law stipulates that

<sup>48</sup> *Armenian Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 3, 2001, pp. 32, 33.

**In this way, the draft law is radical enough to target those trying to achieve normal relations with Turkey.**

those denying, approving of "genocide", or discussing its verity to be punished.<sup>49</sup>

As there can be no one daring to deny "genocide" in Armenia, the reason behind a need for such a law begs question. The Chairman of Agricultural-Industrial Popular Unity, Hmat Hovanisian, in his speech delivered in this regard, accused the officials of the Ter-Petrosian era, who endeavored to normalize Turkish-Armenian relations, especially Jirayir Libaridian, the author of the book "Challenge of Statehood",<sup>50</sup> and Murad Boyaliian who still is under arrest allegedly due to spying for Turkey.<sup>51</sup> Though not mentioned by Hovannisian, that the Armenian members of the still-inactive Turkish-Armenian Reconciliation Commission will also be susceptible to punishment seems rather granted, if the law is adopted.

In this way, the draft law is radical enough not only to target those denying the "genocide", but also those trying to achieve normal relations with Turkey. As the Armenian government has been mute with regard to this draft it is difficult to predict whether it will be adopted at this stage. Yet if adopted a proper response could be from the Turkish side the adoption by the Turkish Parliament of the draft law submitted by the Foreign Affairs Commission to other commissions (and which is probably still on the agenda of the latter) named "Law against International Diffamation, Accusation and Manipulations"<sup>52</sup> must be discussed and adopted immediately.

### **11. The Second Armenia and Diaspora Conference**

As announced by President Kocharian, after being elected in 1998, a conference attended by delegates both from Armenia and Diaspora, was held on 22-23 September, 1999 in Yerevan.

Trying to forge close relations with the Diaspora Armenians, unlike his predecessor Ter-Petrosian, President Kocharian is

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<sup>49</sup> *PanArmenian News*. 19 April 2002.

<sup>50</sup> *The Challenge of Statehood*. Armenian Political Thinking since Independence

<sup>51</sup> *RFE/RL*, Armenia Report, 20 April 2002.

<sup>52</sup> *Law against International Diffamation, Accusation and Manipulations*, Armenian Studies, No. 1, pp. 21, 22.



**President Kocharian is expecting to secure an increase in aid and investments from Armenians abroad, and to get their support in the Karabakh issue.**

so-called Armenian genocide.

The second Armenia – Diaspora Conference was held on 27-28 May in Yerevan. According to press, half of the delegates, participating in the organization were from Diaspora and the other half from Armenia (total 3000). The Declaration that was adopted at the end of the conference<sup>53</sup> spoke of the terrible wound that the Armenian nation suffered as a result of the planned action by the Ottoman Turkey, which caused the mass annihilation of 1.5 million Armenians, yet that this nation managed to withstand this blow and establish the first Armenian Republic on 28 May, 1918 as a result of heroic struggles,<sup>54</sup> though that state was destructed by a renewed Turkish aggression.<sup>55</sup>

Moreover, the declaration which states that Diaspora should link its identity and honor not only to the past but also to the existence of the Armenian state and have a responsibility towards it, amounts to an indirect expectation from the Diaspora to provide more aid to Armenia. The phrases considering the liberation of Artsakh (a name given to Karabakh by Armenians) as the greatest achievement of Armenia in modern times, proves that despite the resolutions of the United Nations Armenians see Karabakh as annexed to Armenia. The words on raising the level of prosperity of the people of Karabakh too indicates that Diaspora extend its help to Karabakh.

<sup>53</sup> [www.armeniasdiaspora.com/conference2002/htms/declar\\_eng.htm](http://www.armeniasdiaspora.com/conference2002/htms/declar_eng.htm)

<sup>54</sup> The Sardarabad battle is mentioned. As in 1918 Russia withdrew from the Ottoman territories it occupied in 1878, Armenians fought Ottoman forces to invade these lands but were not successful. Though advancing Ottoman armies towards Yerevan were stopped in Sadrabad in late May 1918, Armenians unable to carry out war were compelled to sign the Batum Treaty on 4 June, 1918, accepting all Ottoman demands.

<sup>55</sup> To take East Anatolian territories granted to Armenia by the Sèvres Treaty, Armenians entered into combat with the Turkish forces in the command of Kazım Karabekir in late September 1920, yet being defeated signed the Gümrü Treaty which recognized the Sèvres as invalid.

**It appears that Armenia as much as Diaspora is determined to continue its activities to get "genocide" recognized.**

According to the declaration the main issue of the Diaspora is the preservation and propagation of national character, traditions, culture and identity under differing political and cultural conditions which exist in different countries around the world. This proves that in spite of all the efforts, the basic problem facing Armenians is assimilation.

The following paragraph of the Declaration concerns the so-called Armenian genocide: "The Conference reconfirms its resolve to attain international recognition of the Armenian Genocide in every country around the world. The conference welcomes all the efforts of just-minded friends of the Armenian people in capitals around the world which is proof of the growing commitment of international community to the issue of genocide". It appears that Armenia as much as Diaspora is determined to continue its activities to get "genocide" recognized. This in turn means that Armenia will continue to have problems with Turkey.

Though not expressed in the declaration, according to press, among the submitted projects to the conference, there was one envisaging the establishment of a genocide research center in Armenia. The expectation from such an establishment, it seems, is the intensification of the current studies and training of young scholars on that subject.<sup>56</sup>

## **12. The Reykjavik Meeting**

On an initiative by Turkey, the ministers of foreign affairs of Turkey, Azerbaijan and Armenia got together on 15 May, 2002 in Reykjavik, the city hosting the meeting of the NATO ministers of foreign affairs.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs Ismail Cem, in a speech delivered on 17 February, 2001, stating that a trilateral meeting between Turkey, Azerbaijan and Armenia would accelerate the resolution of conflicts between the two states (Azerbaijan and Armenia) made an offer to this end.<sup>57</sup> Yet the Armenian authorities

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<sup>56</sup> [www.armeniadiaspora.com/conference2002/htms/decisions\\_eng.htm](http://www.armeniadiaspora.com/conference2002/htms/decisions_eng.htm)

<sup>57</sup> *Armenian Studies*, Vol.1, No. 1, 2001, p. 34.

didn't accept it indicating that Turkey clearly takes side of Azerbaijan, that it had not established diplomatic relations with Armenia, and that such a meeting would push the Minsk Group to the sidelines.<sup>58</sup> As Armenia accepted the same offer after a year though the cited reasons for the previous refusal were intact, seem to indicate some changes in the conditions. Indeed, the intensification of the United States' *de facto* presence in the Caucasus, which supported Mr. Cem's offer, rising influence of Turkey which had already been engaged in the security issues of the region, and absence of opposition of the Russian Federation to that meeting constituted the main reasons behind Armenian's decision to sit at the table.

A press release following the meeting stated that "the ministers discussed ways of solving the existing problems in the sphere of security and regional cooperation".<sup>59</sup> The Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkey added that, the meeting was organized with the initiative of Turkey and support of Azerbaijan and Armenia, that, it was the first meeting between the ministers of foreign affairs of the three states, that the ministers discussed current security and other local problems and the possibilities of cooperation, that the meeting was a positive precedence for future activities, and that the ministers may get together within the framework of Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization, of which the three states are members.<sup>60</sup>

Following this meeting the ministers of foreign affairs of Turkey and Armenia had a bilateral meeting. According to one newspaper,<sup>61</sup> Ismail Cem put four conditions for the establishment of diplomatic relations with Armenia:

1. History shouldn't be used as a source of enmity, Yerevan should forgo genocide claims, and accepts that the issue should be left to historians;
2. A clause in the Armenian Constitution demanding territory from Turkey should be removed;
3. The problem of Nagorno Karabakh should be resolved;
4. A security corridor should be established between mainland Azerbaijan and Nakhchevan.

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<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 34, 35.

<sup>59</sup> *Medimax News Agency*, 16 May 2002.

<sup>60</sup> *Anadolu Ajansi*, 15 May 2002.

As this news was also published by different newspapers and agencies, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Armenia, Vartan Oskanian, felt a need to deny that Ismail Cem spoke of the four conditions in the trilateral meeting.<sup>62</sup> He added that in the bilateral meeting, Turkish-Armenian relations, the possibilities of their development, the present obstacles and the ways to overcome them were discussed.

The four points mentioned are Turkey's expectations from Armenia to establish diplomatic relations. These may be called preconditions of Turkey as well.<sup>63</sup> It is meaningless to put forward such issues in a trilateral meeting devoted to regional problems. However, during the Cem-Oskanian meeting, though defined not as "conditions" they were certainly put on the table, since these are the main problems between Turkey and Armenia.

The Foreign Ministers of Turkey and Armenia met on 25 June, 2002, on the sidelines of the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization. The meeting described as "positive"<sup>64</sup> focused on bilateral relations and on the southern Caucasus and especially on Karabakh. The Armenian Foreign Minister said after the meeting "We will continue this process"<sup>65</sup> Following the resignation of Mr Cem Mr. Oskanian repeated his intention to go ahead with the dialogue with Turkey by saying "Now I can only hope that the new Turkish government desires to carry on our dialogue that begun in the beginning of the year".<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> *Hürriyet*, 16 May 2002.

<sup>62</sup> *Interfax*, 18 May 2002; Osbarez Online, 20 May 2002.

<sup>63</sup> For a detailed information on this issue see *Ermeni Araştırmaları*, No. 4, pp. 14, 15, 24.

<sup>64</sup> Agence France Presse 25 June, 2002

<sup>65</sup> Turkish Daily News, 27 June, 2002

<sup>66</sup> ITAR-TASS News Agency 18 July, 2002

# THE FIRST SHOT

Prof. Dr. Justin MCCARTHY\*

**H**istorians should love the truth. A historian has a duty to try to write only the truth. Before historians write they must look at all relevant sources. They must examine their own prejudices, then do all they can to insure that those prejudices do not overwhelm the truth. Only then should they write history. The historians creed must be, "Consider all the sides of an issue; reject your own prejudices. Only then can you hope to find the truth."

Do historians always follow this creed? They do not, but good historians try.

There are ways to tell if a historian has been true to his craft. All important sources of information must be studied: A book on American history that does not draw upon American sources and only uses sources

**Consider all the sides of an issue; reject your own prejudices. Only then can you hope to find the truth.**

written in French cannot be accurate history. All important facts must be considered: a book on the history of the Germans and the Jews that does not mention the death of the Jews in the Holocaust cannot be true. Uncomfortable facts, facts that disagree with one's preconceptions and prejudices must be considered, not avoided or ignored: Any book on the history of the Turks and the Armenians that does not include the history of the Turks who were killed by Armenians cannot be the truth.

This is obvious. It should be so obvious that it need not be said. But we know it must be said, because so many have forgotten the rules of honest history.

Like historians, politicians also have a duty to truth. If they make pronouncements on history, they assume the duties of historians. They must look honestly at the historical record, the whole historical record. They must not accept that what they are

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told is true because political pressure groups tell them it is true. They must not accept that something is true because their fathers believed it was true. They must not accept as truth what their own prejudices tell them is true. If politicians speak on history, if politicians pass resolutions on history, then they must follow the rules of history. Otherwise, what the politicians proclaim will not be the truth. It may be good politics. It may win votes. But it will never be the truth

Again, this should be obvious. If politicians believe they are historians, they must follow the rules of historians. This is not, however, a lesson that has been learned by the parliaments that have passed resolutions on what is called the "Armenian Genocide." The appalling historical pronouncements of politicians are easy to recognize as bad history. When they passed their resolutions on the Armenians did the French Parliament or the European Union Parliament consider any evidence that disagreed with their prejudices? No. When President Jacques Chirac declared recently that all governments should accept the "Armenian Genocide" did he make a detailed study of all the sources, including what the Ottomans recorded? No. Did those who attempted to pass "genocide resolutions" in the American Congress acknowledge that millions of Turks died in the same conflict? No. In the counterfeit history of these self-proclaimed historians the only dead were Armenians.

It can be argued that members of the French Parliament or the European Union government could never follow the rules of historians. They have no time for detailed research on historical issues. They have little or no training in the study of history. To them I offer this unsolicited advice: if you cannot do the work necessary to find the truth, say nothing.

I will admit that as a historian I am angered by those who refuse to study the whole issue, but speak freely from their own prejudices or for their own political advantage. I am also angered by the hypocrisy of those who falsely proclaim that they are indeed studying all sides of the Armenian Question, when in fact they are doing no such thing.

Historical knowledge depends on debate. No matter how hard we try to see all sides of an issue, each of us is fallible. All historians can make mistakes. We learn our mistakes through debate. We listen to others who disagree with us, consider our

evidence, and sometimes change our minds. Someone who will not study the evidence brought by others is not a scholar. Someone who will not listen to the judgments of others is only pretending to be a historian.

Recently there have been meetings on the Armenian Question held in Germany and America. The meetings in America were mainly held behind closed doors. They were secret. No one but the participants know what went on in these meetings. Some few meetings have allowed the public to listen, but have never included speakers who have doubted the existence of the "Armenian Genocide." Nevertheless, these meetings have been widely publicized, because there have been both Turks and Armenians at these meetings. The Armenian nationalists say, "You see, Turkish scholars agree with us."

Who are these Turks? They are those who have passed a test before they are allowed into the club. Before they can be a part of the gatherings, the Turks must agree that there was an Armenian genocide. The Armenian nationalists will not meet, or even speak, with anyone who disagrees with them. So these meetings are not scholarly inquiries. They are political gatherings of those who wish to condemn the Turks, and some of those who condemn the Turks happen to be Turks themselves.

There is nothing strange in this. I need not tell you that there are Turks whose ideology drives their historical judgement or that there are Turks who honestly disagree with the large majority of other Turkish scholars. It is a good thing to have disagreement, because wisdom comes out of debate. That is the problem with these meetings--they are not debates.

**Attacking those who disagree with you is the way of the Armenian nationalists who bomb professors' houses, kill diplomats, threaten scholars, and take advantage of unjust French laws to sue professors who dare to speak out.**

I have recently read many e-mails and letters that condemn the Turks who meet with the Armenians. Other Turks condemn them for in some way betraying their country. This is not right. No scholar should ever be attacked because he says what is unpopular. Freedom is the basis of all good scholarship, and that

includes the freedom to be wrong. Attacking those who disagree with you is the way of the Armenian nationalists who bomb professors' houses, kill diplomats, threaten scholars, and take advantage of unjust French laws to sue professors who dare to speak out.

I hope this is never the way of the Turks. I go into bookstores in Istanbul and Ankara and see books in Turkish, written by Turkish citizens. These books state that the Turks did commit genocide. I read Turkish newspapers that include interviews with men whose words sound as if they were been written by Armenian nationalists. Sometimes I laugh at their arguments. Sometimes they anger me. But I know that it is a good thing that they are able to speak. It shows that Turkey is mature enough, confident enough, to accept disagreement.

So are these scholars not to be criticized? Yes, I do rebuke them--not for disagreeing with me, not for being wrong, surely not for betraying Turkey. I accuse them of betraying scholarship. I condemn their closed meetings. I accuse all those who only speak to their friends, then pretend they are holding dialogues. I rebuke anyone who refuses to listen to disagreement.

I ask only one question of those, whether Turks or Armenians, who hold their secret meetings. I ask only one question of those, whether Turks or Armenians, who will only talk with their ideological friends. I ask only one question of those, whether Turks or Armenians, who refuse all scholarly debate. What are you afraid of?

I renew the call for honest debate. Those who believe in their cause should be willing to defend it with their words. They must be willing to argue, not just to preach to those who agree with them.

To the parliamentarians and the historians I offer one more piece of advice: Forget the politics and ask the real historical questions. No study of the history of the Armenians and the Turks can be undertaken unless one central question is asked: Whatever they believe the Turks did, whether genocide or self-defense, why would the Turks do it?

One of the main problems with the Armenian nationalist explanation has always been the question of why the Turks would attack the Armenians. The Turks and other Muslims were a large majority in a Muslim Empire. They had lived with the Armenians



for centuries, and allowed the Armenians to keep their customs and religion. Yet, if one believes the Armenian nationalists, the Turks suddenly decided to attack the Armenians. Worse, the Turks suddenly decided to destroy all the Armenians in a planned genocide. The Armenian nationalists have invented many supposed reasons for the imaginary Turkish plan: The Turks supposedly planned to steal Armenian property. They supposedly desired to link the Turks of Anatolia with the Turks of Central Asia and Armenians stood in the way. Or the Ottomans needed Armenian land to house the Turkish refugees from the Balkan Wars. More emotional reasons have also been invented: The Turks allegedly desired to kill the Armenians out of jealousy, because the Turks felt the Armenians were superior. Or the Turks purportedly acted out of what was called "religious hatred."

Did the Turks wish to seize the property of the Armenians? If so, it would indeed be odd that the Turks fought against Armenians in Eastern Anatolia, where the Armenians were relatively poor, and did not touch the property of rich Armenians in Istanbul, Edirne, and Izmir. Of course, we can never prove that in their hearts Turks did not covet Armenian property. We can ask, however, who had stolen whose property? Who was the thief? Who was the victim? When World War I began Armenians were living in seized Turkish property in Erivan, Karabakh, and Kars. Turks had not stolen Armenian property; Armenians had stolen Turkish property. During World War I, when the Russians invaded Eastern Anatolia, it was the Armenians who once again first stole the property of Turks and Kurds. Only after 100 years of losing their homes and farms did the Muslims of Anatolia finally take their revenge and seize Armenian property.



The desire to join with Central Asian Turks was indeed a mad dream of some Ottoman leaders, particularly Enver Paşa. It never was considered seriously, except perhaps for Azerbaijan. In any case, how would the Armenians have stood in the way of such a plan? The path to Central Asia, had the Ottomans been mad enough to take it, was through Iran, not Armenia. It only takes one look at a map to prove this. A Turkish army advancing north through Armenia to reach Central Asia would have had to pass over the highest point of the Caucasus Mountains, then over desert and steppe, and finally around the Aral Sea to the South. Not even Enver Paşa would have tried that. Even Cengiz Han took the coast road. Would the other Armenians, those who lived in Ottoman Anatolia, have stood in the way of Ottoman conquest to the East? They would only have been a problem if they took up arms to prevent the advance. They did indeed take up arms against the Ottomans, but the Armenian revolt had nothing to do with Central Asia.

The theory that the Ottomans planned to take Armenian lands for Balkan War refugees has an evident problem. The refugees were all housed before the beginning of World War I and they were almost all housed in Thrace and Western Anatolia, not in Eastern Anatolia

**As for "religious hatred," history shows this to be a laughable lie. Is one to believe that the Muslims, having accepted the Armenians for 700 years, would decide to violate the principles of Islam and no longer accept the Christian right to exist?**

Did the Turks hate the Armenians and try to kill them because they felt the Armenians were superior? There is of course no evidence of this in any Ottoman document or speech, but the evidence I prefer is what is evident to anyone who has lived Turks. I have known many Turks over the past 35 years. Most of those Turks felt that all men were equal. No Turk ever felt that Turks were inferior to anyone. I very much doubt if the Ottoman Turks felt any different.

As for "religious hatred," history shows this to be a laughable lie. Is one to believe that the Muslims, having accepted the Armenians for 700 years, would decide to violate the principles of Islam and no longer accept the Christian right to exist? Is one to forget that the history of the Ottomans was one of exemplary tolerance, much better than the record of Christian states? No, the Muslims of the East did indeed begin to hate and fear Armenians, but that was a result of Armenian and Russian actions.

In the final analysis, the arguments of the Armenian nationalists come down to one assertion-the Turks were crazy. After 700 years of coexistence the Turks suddenly began to hate the Armenians and resolved to kill them. No other explanation can satisfy the Armenian nationalist desire to blame the Turks. All the explanations that are given for the supposed genocide depend on the Turks acting completely irrationally.

I have heard it argued that this explanation makes sense. After all, the Germans acted irrationally when they killed the Jews. The differences are worth considering. The Nazis called upon a long tradition of hatred of the Jews. The history of Europe had been filled with attacks on Jews. There was also a long German tradition of evil literature written against the Jews. Hitler and his followers thus called upon a long tradition of hatred. They used prejudice against Jews as a tool to aid their rise to power.

Was anything similar ever seen in the Ottoman Empire? Before the beginning of Armenian revolts had there been attacks on Armenians like the German attacks on Jews? No. Was there a long

**The real reason the Turks fought the Armenians is easily explained and completely rational. The Turks were defending themselves.**

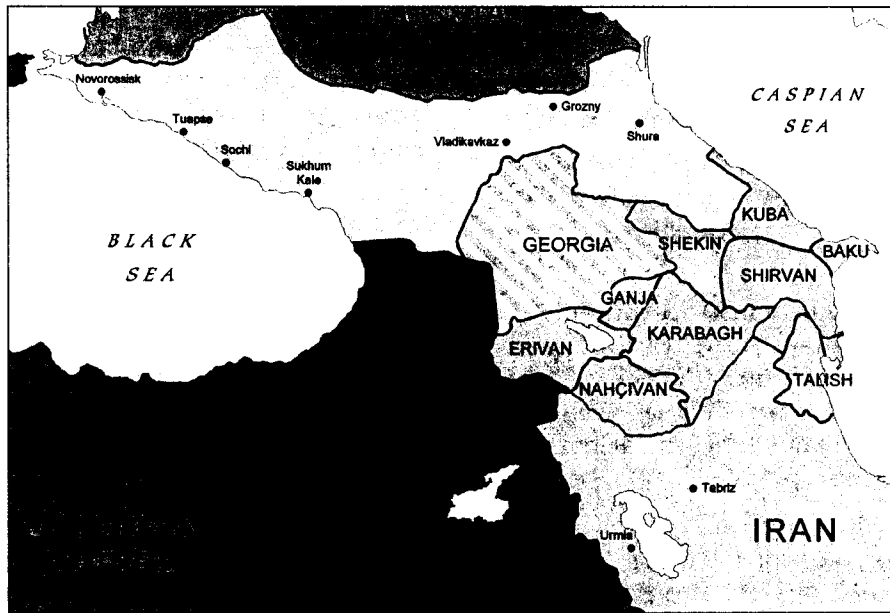
tradition of Ottoman popular writings against Armenians? No. Did any Turkish political parties base their campaigns on animosity to Armenians? No. In fact, even while Armenian nationalists were rebelling against the Ottomans other Armenians were welcomed into

the Ottoman Government. Armenians rose to high positions in the Ottoman State. European-style racial hatred was foreign to the Ottoman Empire. The sort of prejudice that resulted in the deaths of the German Jews was virtually unknown in the Ottoman Empire. Any claim that "racial hatred" led to aggression against Armenians is pure fantasy.

It is better to look for rational reasons for the conflict that developed between Turks and Armenians. The real reason the Turks fought the Armenians is easily explained and completely rational. The Turks were defending themselves.

This brings the next question: Who started the conflict between the Armenians and the Turks? Who was the attacker? Who was defending himself?

Other historians and I usually avoid those questions. When I have spoken and written on the history of the Turks and Armenians I have described it as a sad chapter in the history of humanity. I have even said that who was at fault was not the real issue. I have said that the real issue is the suffering of humanity, whether Turks or Armenians. That is still the most important consideration. But the question of who was the attacker must now be considered, because the politicians who condemn the Turks have never been satisfied to pity all suffering humanity. When Armenian nationalists have admitted any Turkish suffering they have said that Turkish deaths were the result of war and Armenian deaths were the result of genocide. They have said that Turks persecuted Armenians, then suffered because of what the Turks started. Was this true? Did the Turks suffer because they attacked the Armenians? Was what happened the fault of the Turks, and so should we feel less pity for the Turks? To answer this, we must study who started the conflicts between Turks and Armenians.



Contrary to what is usually told, the conflict began not in the Ottoman Empire in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, but in what was then the Persian Empire in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Armenians, including officials of the Armenian Church, allied themselves with Russian invaders. In 1796, Armenians living in Derbend were instrumental in the Russian defeat of the khan of Derbend and the capture of the city by the Russians. An Armenian bishop of the 1790s preached that Armenians should join the Russians to, "free the Armenians from Muslim Rule. Most Armenians of Azerbaijan did not take any side, but those who did take sides supported the Russians. Armenian volunteers fought alongside the Russians throughout the Russian conquest of Azerbaijan and Erivan.

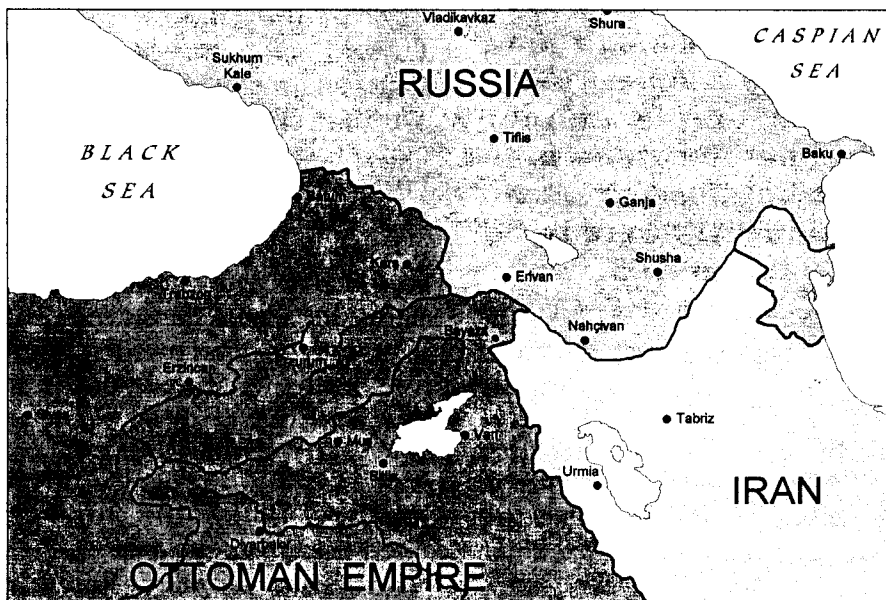
More than anything else, Armenian loyalty to the Russians was shown by their desire to live under Russian rule. When the Russians took Karabakh and Erivan, they killed or evicted Muslims, mostly Turks, who lived there. Their empty homes and farms were taken by Armenians from Persia and Ottoman Anatolia. As more Turks were evicted in the coming decade, more Armenians came to take their place. It must be remembered that a majority of the population of what is today the Armenian Republic were Turks before the Russians conquered. Soon the majority was no longer Turkish.

**They did not wish the will of the people. They wished to rule. And the Muslims who stood in the way of the Armenian nationalists were to be removed.**

Armenians had lived with Turks in the Southern Caucasus region for 700 years. Their lives had not been perfect, nor had the lives of the Turks. Yet the proof that they must have been treated with tolerance is the fact that 700 years after the arrival of the Turks the Armenians were still there. They were not hiding in the mountains, fiercely defending their independence. They were living all over the region and working in the cities, where they could easily have been eradicated. Yet they lived in peace. The Armenians were a scattered people, living all over the region. In no province of the Southern Caucasus were they a majority. When the Russians arrived, many of the Armenians joined the invaders against their governments. Those who joined the Russians wanted a minority, the Armenians and Russians, to rule over a majority, a Muslim majority under whose rule they had lived for 700 years. They did not wish democracy. They did not wish the will of the people. They wished to rule. And the Muslims who stood in the way of the Armenian nationalists were to be removed.

It was not the Turks who attacked the Armenians. It was the Armenians who attacked the Turks.

The Russians carried the invasions into Eastern Anatolia in a war in 1828-29 and in the Crimean War. Ottoman and Russian Armenians joined the Russian side when they invaded Anatolia, and they acted as spies and scouts for the Russians. When the Russians were forced to withdraw, thousands of Armenians left with them. They had taken the side of their country's enemy.



### 1877-78 Russo-Turkish War

At the beginning of the 1877-78 war between Russia and the Ottoman Empire the Ottomans should have been able to depend on their subjects, whether Muslim or Christian. Indeed, 84 Christians of Erzurum had volunteered for military service on the first day that Christians were accepted into the Ottoman Army. However, the Russian consul at Erzurum notified the Christian bishops that Russia did not look kindly on Christians fighting for their country. The bishops told the Christians not to serve, and the Christians no longer enrolled.

All who live on a battleground suffer, but the Armenians of the East were neither selected out nor persecuted by the Ottoman government during the war. Instead, there is plentiful evidence from European sources that civil and Muslim officials protected Armenians from Kurdish attacks. Sadly, when the Ottomans lost the war they were not able to protect the Muslims from the Armenians.

When Kars fell to the Russians, local Armenians attacked both Ottoman soldiers and the local Turks. The British reported that the Armenians were assisting the Russians in murdering the Turkish wounded. Upon conquering Erzurum, the Russians placed an

**The Dashnaks declared their intention "to stimulate fighting and to terrorize government officials . . ." and "to expose government establishments to looting and destruction."**

Mohammaden population."

During the war, many Armenians in the Ottoman East joined the Russian side. Ottoman Armenians acted as scouts and spies for Russian invaders. None so wholeheartedly allied themselves with the Russians as the Armenians of the Eleşkirt Valley. They confidently expected that the Russians would retain all they had conquered. This was not to be. Other European Powers forced the Russians to withdraw from Eleşkirt. Between 2 and 3,000 Armenian families joined the Russians in their withdrawal. There was no lack of houses and farms to give the Armenians who joined the Russians, because the Russians had forced 70,000 Turks from the region they conquered.

### **Armenian Revolutionary Organizations**

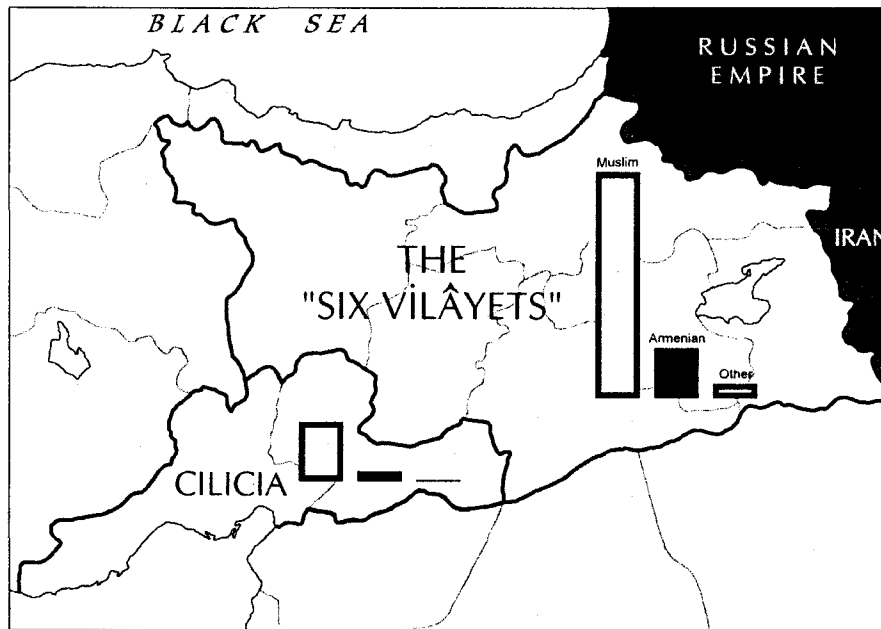
The Dashnaksuthiun Party, the Armenian Revolutionary Federation, known usually as the Dashnaks, was founded in Tiflis in the Russian Empire in 1890. It joined earlier Armenian nationalist parties in planning the downfall of the Ottoman Empire in Anatolia. The party was socialist and nationalist in ideology. Its Manifesto declared a "people's war against the Turkish government." It spoke of "the sacred task of securing national freedom." Amidst calls for redistribution of land, communal brotherhood, and good government, the Dashnak Program of 1892 set forth its revolutionary intentions. These included organizing revolutionary committees and fighting bands and arming "the people. The Dashnaks declared their intention "to stimulate fighting and to terrorize government officials . . ." and "to expose government establishments to looting and destruction."<sup>1</sup> In the ensuing years they carried out their plan.

<sup>1</sup> Louise Nalbandian, *The Armenian Revolutionary Movement*, Berkeley, 1963, pp. 156-168.



The Dashnak motto (1896) was "Arms! Battle! The victory is ours!"<sup>2</sup>

There is neither the time nor the need to describe here the organization and philosophy of the Dashnaks and the other Armenian revolutionary movements. Their own words indicate their purpose—bloody rebellion against the Ottoman Empire. It is more important to consider their deeds than to study their words. One thing must be understood about the purpose of the Armenian revolution, however: The aim of the Armenian revolutionaries was very different than the aim of other nationalist revolutionaries. The people of Italy were Italian. Italian revolutions wanted a state where the majority ruled. Polish nationalists wanted to create a state for the Poles, who were an oppressed majority, ruled by a Russian minority. The same was true all over the world—whatever their methods, good and bad, nationalists at least fought for a state in which the majority would rule themselves.



<sup>2</sup> Nalbandian, p. 178

**The only way to create an "Armenia" was to exile or kill the majority.**

It was not so with the Armenian nationalists. Armenian revolutionaries fought to conquer a land in which they were less than 20% of the population. In the region they claimed, the so-called "Six Vilâyets," Muslims outnumbered them by more than four to one. Unlike the Poles, the Italians, the Uzbeks, the South Africans, the Algerians, or the Irish, the Armenians were not a large majority ruled by an imperial master. They were a small group who wished to defeat the majority and seize their land. They were a small group that enlisted the aid of the enemies of their country, because they could never conquer the large majority of Muslims without outside help.

What would the Armenian nationalists have done if they had succeeded? History teaches from the sad example of the fate of the Turks of the Balkans. The only way to create an "Armenia" was to exile or kill the majority. There could never have been an Armenia state in Anatolia unless the revolutionaries had rid themselves of the Muslims.

This fact must be remembered whenever one considers the Ottoman response to the Armenian revolutionaries. The Ottomans were not only defending their government. They were defending the majority of their people against those who would deny majority rule. Moreover, they were defending those who would be dead or exiled if the revolutionaries succeeded.

**The 1890s Rebellions**

Armenian rebellions took place in Eastern Anatolia in the 1860s and earlier. But it was in the 1890s that the Armenian revolutionary organizations truly began to put their plans into effect.

In 1894, Armenians in the Sasun region rebelled against the government. Large rebel bands concentrated their attacks on symbols of the Ottoman State—tax collectors, government officials, official buildings. They also fought battles with Kurdish tribesmen. There had always been animosity between the Armenians and the Kurdish tribes. This much is understandable. Whether or not one approves of Armenian rebellion, it is understood that rebels attack the government and their old enemies. What happened next is not

**The Armenian leader himself claimed to have killed 25,000 Muslims. The Ottoman army was not even allowed to punish the murderers. The European Powers protected them.**

Muslims. The result was horrible for both.

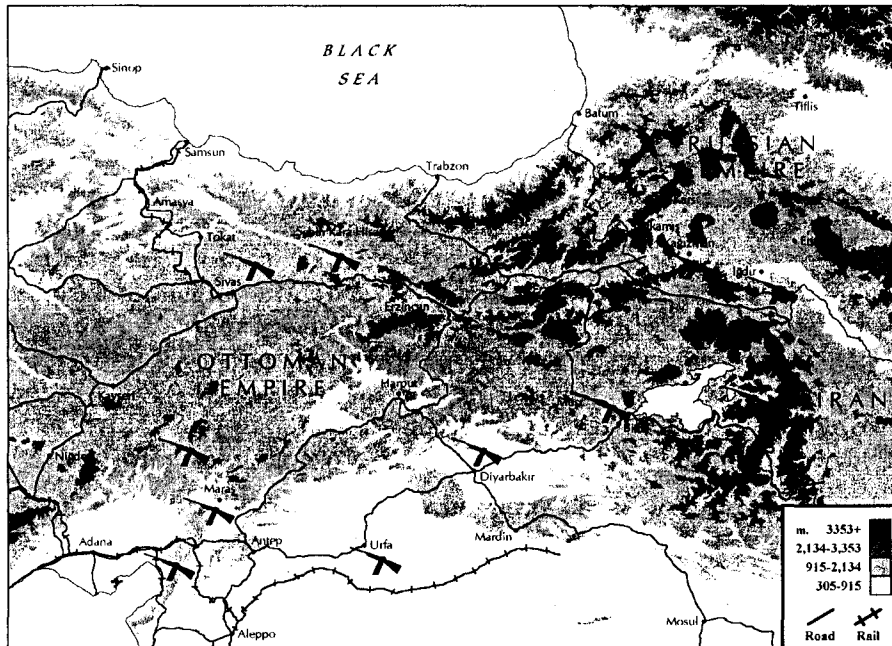
The actions of Armenian rebels in Zeytun and Maraş in 1895 were all too similar. Their rebellion was a mass murder of Muslims of the region. The Armenian leader himself claimed to have killed 25,000 Muslims. The Ottoman army was not even allowed to punish the murderers. The European Powers protected them.

In Van in the same year the rebels, and many innocent Muslims and Armenians, died when the Armenian nationalists once again rebelled. In Adana in 1909 it was the same; Armenians rebelled, confident of European support that never came. Although the Armenians suffered the greater mortality, Armenian rebel forces unquestionably began the conflict. The Turks responded. They were not only protecting their state; they were protecting their people.

In Sasun, in Van, in Zeytun, in Maraş, and in Adana, it was Armenian rebels who began the slaughter. It was the Armenian rebels who began to murder their fellow Ottoman citizens. It was not the Turks who attacked the Armenians. It was the Armenians who attacked the Turks.

in any way excusable. The Ottoman army advanced on the rebels. As the rebels retreated they slaughtered the Muslim inhabitants of the villages in their path. In response, the army and local Muslims killed Armenians.

It was not the Muslims who began to kill Armenians. It was Armenians who began to kill



### The World War I

The events of World War I cannot be understood without first looking at the Balkan Wars of 1912 and 1913. Those wars gave revolutionaries a reason to believe that their methods would be successful. Nationalist rebel bands killed the Turks of the Balkans and drove them from their homes. Invading armies finished the job of murder and exile. Muslims, most of them Turks, had been a slight majority in Ottoman Europe in 1912. By the end of the Balkan Wars they were a distinct minority. 27% of the Muslims of the Ottoman Balkans had died. What remained were Bulgarian, Greek, Montenegrin, and Serbian states that had rid themselves of their Muslim populations. Lands that had Muslim majorities now had Christian majorities. This was exactly what the Armenian revolutionaries would have to do on a greater scale, and it had worked in the Balkans.

Both sides learned the lessons of the Balkan Wars. The Turks knew what would happen to them if revolutionaries succeeded. The intentions of the Armenian rebels were the same as the intentions of those who had forced the Turks from the Balkans. They wished to rid Eastern Anatolia of its Muslim majority, so that

**Large caches of guns, ammunition, supplies, and even uniforms had been hidden in depots in Anatolia, ready for use.**

it could become "Armenia." To do so they would use the same tactics that had been effective in the Balkans.

Even before the first world war began, Armenian guerilla bands had begun to organize in the Russian Empire. These

included Armenians from both Russia and the Ottoman Empire. Approximately 8,000 Ottomans went to Kağızman to train and organize. 6,000 went from Anatolia to Iğdır, more to other training camps. They returned to fight the Turks and to aid the Russian war effort. Large caches of guns, ammunition, supplies, and even uniforms had been hidden in depots in Anatolia, ready for use.

These were not small units of guerillas. They were not a few men committing random acts of terrorism. There were indeed innumerable such individual acts, but the main Armenian attack came from well-armed and trained rebel bands. They may have numbered as many as 100,000 men. In Sivas Vilâyeti alone Ottoman officials estimated 30,000 Armenian partisans.

The mythology of Armenian history holds that peaceful Armenians were attacked without provocation by Turks. The reality was far different.

To understand the situation, one should attempt to visualize the situation on the Ottoman-Russian border in Spring of 1915. The Ottoman Army on the Russian Front was in ruins. Enver Paşa had tried to defeat the Russians with a bold but ill-conceived attack at Sarıkamış. He had failed badly. 3/4 of his army had been lost. All that stood between the Ottoman heartland and Russian invaders were the remnant of the Ottoman Army in the East. Some of these were very good troops. The gendarmery divisions, made up of gendarmes from the East who knew the territory well, were particularly effective. But the Ottoman forces were few. The Russians were more numerous and better equipped. The only chance the Ottoman forces had was to hold their defensive positions. Every man was needed at the front.

However, thousands of men could not advance to the front. They were needed to fight behind the lines. Indeed, some of the best soldiers were withdrawn from the front and sent to fight internal enemies, Armenian rebels. The Russian Front was in

danger. Ultimately it collapsed. Ultimately the Russians invaded and conquered Eastern Anatolia, bringing with them triumphant Armenian rebels.

The Russian invasion of Anatolia in 1915 was spearheaded by units made up of Armenians from both Ottoman Anatolia and Russia. Armenians served as scouts for the Russian Army. Most important, bands of Armenians hampered transportation and cut military communications throughout the Ottoman East.

The internal threat from Armenian guerillas, Armenian chette bands, was a serious threat to the existence of the Ottoman Empire and a real threat to the lives of the Muslims of Anatolia.

Before any Armenians were deported, before any Armenian nationalist politician was hung, before any Armenian died at the hands of an Ottoman soldier, even before war was officially declared, Armenian nationalists had begun to organize their rebellion. The actions of the Armenian rebels were not simply rebellion. Ottoman Armenians acted as agents of the Russian Army. They made war on their own country, the Ottoman Empire, and fought on the side of its main enemy, the Russian Empire. As they freely admitted at the time, they were traitors who had enlisted with their country's worst enemy.

In order to see the effect of the Armenian Rebellion, one need only look at the map. Only the main centers of rebellion are shown. Armenian bands were actually travelling throughout Eastern Anatolia, hindering transportation, cutting communications lines, and attacking isolated Muslim villages. Only the regions of major activity by large bodies of men can be shown on the map.

At first glance, some of the regions of rebellion seem to be oddly chosen. Why Sivas? It seems an unlikely place for a rebellion. Only 13% of the population of Sivas Vilâyeti was Armenian. Sivas was far from the front, far from possible Russian support. But look at the roads. In order to reach the battle with the Russians, troops and supplies had to pass through Sivas. Retreating soldiers also were forced to pass through Sivas. Sivas was also the hub for the telegraph system that extended to the battle zone. The city and province of Sivas were transportation and communication bottlenecks. Any disruption in Sivas was a blow against the Ottoman war effort.

The regions of Armenian rebellion in Cilicia and Urfa were also in regions with great strategic importance. Because the Taurus tunnels had not been completed, war materials and soldiers for the theater of war in Iraq had to be trans-shipped in Cilicia, then travel on through the Urfa Region. The British seriously considered attacking in Cilicia rather than Gallipoli (and would have been far more successful if they had.)

Armenian forces in Van and in the Russian border areas also had a potential strategic effect. The Russians had moved into Western Iran. They threatened Ottoman positions in the East and ultimately intended to attack into Iraq and join with the British. (No one expected that the Ottomans would defeat the British in Iraq.) In order to check the Russian advance, the Ottomans should have moved East. There were only two possible roads from Anatolia into Iran--the routes through Bayezit in the North or through Van in the South. Is it only coincidence that these two were major centers of Armenian rebellion?

Until someone is able to research Russian army orders to Armenian units, we will not know how much of the Armenian rebellion was well planned to aid the Russians. It seems unlikely that such strategic points were chosen at random. The important point, however, is not why they were chosen but the grave danger they presented to the Ottoman forces. The Ottomans needed to put down the revolt. They needed to do so because Armenian forces were slaughtering Muslims, but they also needed to do so for military reasons. The Armenian rebels were enemy forces that were contributing to Ottoman defeat.

The main Armenian contribution to the Russians was the fact that their rebellion occupied so many Ottoman soldiers and gravely hindered the Ottoman war effort. But from the standpoint of humanity, the worst effect of the Armenian rebellion was the mortality of the innocent Muslim civilians killed by the Armenian rebels and, it should not be forgotten, the mortality of the innocent Armenian civilians who were killed in revenge. It was Armenian rebels who began the killing. By far the greatest number of dead were Muslims.

Why did the Ottomans deport the Armenians? They did it to remove a civilian population that would surely aid and comfort the enemy, as had been proven. Perhaps most of the Armenians would not have acted against the Ottomans, but how could anyone

**Why did the Ottomans deport the Armenians? They did it to remove a civilian population that would surely aid and comfort the enemy, as had been proven.**

had good reason to act as they did. Nor should it be forgotten that it was the Armenians and Russians who first forced Muslims from their homes.

know who would and who would not aid the Russians, the British, and the French? I believe that, in the heat of war and in their desire to defend their Empire and its people, the Ottomans went too far and deported many who were no threat. But it should never be forgotten that the Ottomans

One fact cannot be doubted. During World War I, as for 100 years before, it was not the Turks who first attacked the Armenians. It was the Armenians who first attacked the Turks.



### **Azerbaijan and Armenia**

At the end of World War I, it was the turn of the Turks of Azerbaijan to be attacked. Allied with Bolsheviks in Baku, Armenian nationalist forced nearly half of the Turkish population of Baku to flee the city. Between 8 and 10,000 Muslims, almost all Turks, were killed in Baku alone. The Armenian guerilla leader



**Those who claim there was an "Armenian Genocide" are in the habit of taking their facts selectively and out of their historical context.**

Andranik destroyed villages in Nahçivan and Southern Azerbaijan, forcing more than 60,000 Turkish refugees to flee. 420 villages were destroyed. Hundreds of villages were ruined and many thousand more Turks were killed in Kars Province. Two-thirds of the Turks of Erivan Province disappeared. Turks took revenge in Baku and elsewhere, but it was Turks who most suffered mortality and exile.

The Turks of the provinces of Erivan, Kars, and Azerbaijan had been completely under the control of the Russians. Almost all unarmed, they had neither the ability nor the desire for war. It was Armenians who initiated the conflicts. It was not the Turks who attacked the Armenians. It was Armenians who attacked the Turks.

### **The Armenian Claims**

Those who claim there was an "Armenian Genocide" are in the habit of taking their facts selectively and out of their historical context.

We are told that the Ottoman Government deported the Armenians, and that many died during the deportation. This is true, although the number who died are always grossly exaggerated. What facts are ignored? The fact that most of the Armenians who were deported survived, indicating there was no plan of genocide.

We are told that in the 1890s tens of thousands of Armenians were killed by Muslims. This is true. What is never told is that tens of thousands of Muslims were killed by Armenians, and that the Armenians began the killing.

You know well the main fact about World War I that always goes unmentioned—the millions of Muslim dead. Any war in which only one side's dead are counted appears to be a genocide.

And one incontrovertible fact that is never mentioned is the truth we have discussed today—Armenians died because of conflicts started by Armenians. The Turks responded to Armenian attacks. Sometimes the Turks overreacted; sometimes they acted

out of revenge, sometimes the actions of Turks and Kurds were wrong. But the Turks did not start the bloodshed. They did not start the long conflict between Armenians and Muslims that began in the 1790s. They did not start the conflict between Turks and Armenians in World War I.

In 1796, was it Turks who attacked Armenians? No, it was Armenian rebels who allied themselves with the enemies of their country.

In 1828, it was not the Turks who attacked the Armenians. It was the Armenians who took the homes and farms of the Turks.

In 1878, was it the Turks who attacked the Armenians? No, it was Armenian rebels who once again helped the Russian invaders. It was Armenians who oppressed the Turks of Erzurum.

In the 1890s did the Turks first attack the Armenians? No, it was Armenian revolutionaries who first attacked the Turks.

In 1909, did the Turks first attack the Armenians? No, it was Armenian revolutionaries who began to attack Muslims.

In 1915, did the Turks first attack the Armenians? No, it was Armenian rebels who seized Van and killed Van's Muslims. It was Armenians who raided Muslim villages and killed Muslims on the roads. It was Armenians who killed Ottoman officials, destroyed Ottoman army communications, and acted as spies, guerillas, and partisan troops for the Russians.

In 1919 was it the Turks of Baku who first attacked the Armenians? No, it was the Armenians who attacked the Turks.

Some will argue that the actions of the Armenian rebels were justified, because they were not properly governed by the Ottomans. It is true that in many periods of history Ottoman Eastern Anatolia was poorly ruled. But it is also true that the time of Armenian rebellion was also the time when Ottoman rule was greatly improving. Nineteenth century reforms, begun by Mahmud II, passing through the Tanzimat period, and culminating in the reforms of the Committee of Union and Progress, had improved governmental control in the East. It often was this improvement that caused Armenians such as those in Zeytun to revolt, because a stronger central government collected taxes more efficiently.

At the time of the Armenian revolts life was becoming better. The exception to this occurred in the regions that suffered due to

**Muslim excesses, like Armenian excesses, were never justified, but opposition to the Armenian revolt was morally and politically necessary.**

Russian invasion and expulsion of Muslim peoples, and those Russian actions had been supported by the Armenian nationalists. The Armenian nationalists had themselves and their Russian friends to blame.

Whatever the reason for the Armenian revolts, reaction from the Ottomans and local Muslims was justified. Muslim excesses, like Armenian excesses, were never justified, but opposition to the Armenian revolt was morally and politically necessary. The Armenians who rebelled were a minority that planned to dominate a Muslim majority. It was the duty of the sultan's government to fight against such an injustice.

A minority has the right to live in peace. It should be allowed equality under the law, with all legal rights. Its religious freedom should be absolute and always protected. All these rights should be guaranteed to any minority. But a minority should never have the right to rule over a majority. A minority should never have the right to deny rights and freedom to a majority. A minority should never have the right to evict a majority from its homeland. And a minority should never have the right to become a majority through murder and exile of the real majority. This is exactly what the Armenian nationalist rebels attempted to do.

The Turks who opposed the Armenian rebels were doing the moral thing. Their methods were not always good. In the heat of war, crimes were committed and mistakes were made. But the Turks were absolutely right to oppose the rule of a minority. The Turks had the right to defend themselves.

I have said it before, but it is worth saying again. The Ottomans acted rationally in opposing the Armenian revolutionaries. The Armenians were just like other rebels. In the nineteenth century, the Ottomans had fought against Muslim rebels in Eastern Anatolia, Arabia, and Bosnia and against Christian rebels in the Balkans. They had fought to defend their Empire and its people. Of course they also fought against rebel Armenians. That was their duty and, despite many failings, the Ottomans tried to do their duty.

**But those who should be most blamed are those who began the wars, those who committed the first evil deeds, and those who caused the bloodshed.**

Were the Turks and the Kurds innocent babes who hurt no one? They were not. Attacked, they fought back. Often they killed in passion, and the innocent suffered. Both innocent Armenians and innocent Muslims suffered. Did the Armenians sometimes suffer more than the Turks?

Yes. In a century of warfare, sometimes the Turks lost more, sometimes the Armenians. That is the way of war.

However, there is a moral difference between the actions of those who begin a war and those who respond. No one should ever be excused for killing innocent civilians, but the primary guilt is the guilt of those who begin the slaughter. My country, America, responded to the evil of Adolph Hitler and the Nazis by bombing German cities and, in the process, killing civilians. Some actions, such as the bombing of Dresden, were inexcusable. But does anyone doubt who was truly at fault? It was Hitler and his followers who were guilty. The guilty were those who first began to kill for their cause

No one should ever try to say that Turks were completely innocent, but the truly guilty were those who began to kill the innocent.

The question of who started the conflicts is important, both historically and morally important. In more than 100 years of warfare, Turks and Armenians killed each other. The question of who began the killing must be understood, because it is seldom justifiable to be the aggressor, but it is always justifiable to defend yourself. If those who defend themselves go beyond defense and exact revenge, as always happens in war, they should be identified and criticized. But those who should be most blamed are those who began the wars, those who committed the first evil deeds, and those who caused the bloodshed. Those who always began the conflicts were the Armenian nationalists, the Armenian revolutionaries. The guilt is on their heads.

# SOME ABSTRACTS FROM THE MORMON MISSIONARIES ABOUT THE TURKS AND ARMENIANS

Prof. Dr. Seçil KARAL AKGÜN\*

**M**ost history sources on the Armenian Question refer to the strong ties established between the Armenians and the alturistic American Protestant missionaries in the Ottoman Empire. This often invites the attention of the readers to learn more about the missionaries and understand their role in the Turco-Armenian conflicts during the last phase of the Empire. There are abundance of sources displaying the missionaries' views as apologists of the Armenians especially when allegations on Armenian massacres by the Turks are concerned. These views mostly bearing the basic omission of favorable comments for the Turks, usually concentrate on popular assertions of condemning the Ottoman government of being the designer of extermination of a race. However, not much has been written and said about another group of American missionaries who have resided on the same territories for approximately forty years, stretching from 1880's to 1914. This group, representing the Church of Jesus Christ Latter Day Saints, administered from their headquarters by the Mormonic Temple in Salt Lake City, Utah were shortly referred to as the Mormons.

**Using the advantage of benefiting from the experiences of their compatriots, they also chose the Armenians as potential converts and pursued their relations with them.**

Interestingly, Mormon missionaries were also U.S. citizens, and the cause for their existence in the Ottoman Empire was not much different from the Protestant American missionaries: They were highly devoted to their religious convictions and chose to venture in distant lands to preach the Gospel. Their duty was converting, and this compelled them to be amongst and directly in touch with people. Using the advantage of benefiting from the experiences of

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their compatriots, they also chose the Armenians as potential converts and pursued their relations with them. During their mission in the Ottoman Empire, naturally they lived through the same course of history as the former group. However, when we explore into their correspondences, reports, diaries or testimonies (short life stories the Mormons had to present to the Church), we do not come across the same culmination of anti-Turk assertions preached by the Protestant missionaries, nor do we see the Armenian conflicts as the focus of their mission. Assuming that not finding the antagonism encountered in the writings of one group of American missionaries in another would inevitably urge a non-biased reader of Turkish-Armenian relations to learn more about the Mormon missionaries, some documents from Mormon records will be presented in this article.

### **Few Words About Missionary Activities In the Ottoman Empire**

Missionary activities in the Ottoman Empire can be traced back to the 16th century. However, it was not until 1820 that the American Protestant missionaries, anticipating to proselyte Ottoman subjects set foot on Ottoman territories. The 1830 Commercial Treaty between the Ottoman Empire and the United States, believed to be a power imperialistically disinterested in the Empire, also served to bring good reception to American missionaries and soon they became the most influential of the existing missionary groups. Noting the orthodox applications of the Gregorian church towards the Armenians, the American missionaries translated the Bible to Armenian, and in public places and house-calls approached this *millet* in their vernacular language. In addition their religious guidance with their benignant styles, they displayed benevolence through orphanages, Sunday schools, educational institutions, adult classes and medical centers they established especially in areas where the state remained inefficient and soon, won over the Armenians. Meanwhile they became the source of information to the United States, previously uninformed about the Ottoman Empire and the Turks. The Americans learned about this distant land and its people mainly through the correspondences, reports, and articles of the American missionaries.

On the other hand, the Ottoman administrators regarded the American missionaries a bastion against the provocations of the

**The Ottoman administrators regarded the American missionaries a bastion against the provocations of the imperialistic states over the Armenians, hence, welcomed and even encouraged their activities.**

imperialistic states over the Armenians, hence, welcomed and even encouraged their activities. No hardship was encountered for the erection of American consulates when missionaries sought federal support due to Ottoman disorder which increased as Turco-Armenian relations deteriorated. As American missionary stations, and accordingly, consulates multiplied throughout the Ottoman Empire, philanthropic missionary activities started to reflect signs of American foreign policy. Consequently favorable official relations with the missionaries tarnished as Armenianism became the main factor missionaries used to influence U.S relations. Economic concerns between the United States and the Ottoman Empire in the early 19th century declined to the point that in the 1890 s missionaries were the main interest of the U.S. in Ottoman lands.<sup>1</sup>

Towards the end of the century, culminating effects of missionaries' correspondences and reports, no longer pietistic, multiplied imperialistic interests in the Ottoman Empire to the point of serving as an invitation to the Mormons, long in search for a suitable colonization area where they could freely practice their religion.

#### **Now Some Words on Mormonism And Mormon Missionaries**

Mormonism was initiated in Manchester, New York by Joseph Smith in the early 19th century. By 1830, the English version of The Book of Mormon was published and The Church of Jesus Christ Latter Day Saints, briefly referred to as LDS was established.

The principles and practices of Mormonism, claimed to be modernized version of Christianity, actually were quite different than what had been practiced for over 1830 years. They included obedience to living prophet, performing compulsory missionary work to spread the Gospel, restricting alcoholic or caffeinated

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<sup>1</sup> Grabill, Joseph L. Protestant Diplomacy and the Near East, Missionary Influence on American Policy 1810-1927, Minn. 1971, p. 35-40

**Meanwhile, they observed the imperialistic approaches of the powerful European states towards the Ottoman Empire, considerably weakened since the beginning of the century.**

beverages as well as consumption of tobacco while they encouraged practice of polygamy in order to provide rapid development of Mormonism. Although Joseph Smith immediately gained some adherents, his small community was much resented by Christian Americans. Moreover, they were persecuted by Americans and expelled from wherever they settled as they migrated from one place to the other until they reached Salt Lake City, Utah, which became their permanent residence.

Utah's inclusion into the Union in 1850 compelled the Mormons to observe the Federal laws and, of course, the Constitution. This created problems for the Mormons who sought to constitute a theocratic state for themselves while the U.S. Constitution called for secularism; and wished to pursue plural marriages while initially, the social codes in all states, and later, in 1890, the Federal Government outlawed polygamy. Mormons were acknowledged about the practice of polygamy in Islamic societies, and of course, in the Ottoman Empire. Meanwhile, they observed the imperialistic approaches of the powerful European states towards the Ottoman Empire, considerably weakened since the beginning of the century. Accordingly, they did not lose any time in reaching across the Atlantic with the anticipations of colonizing Ottoman territories where they were sure they could freely practice Mormonism. Hence, Mormon missionary activities in the Ottoman Empire started with the arrival of Elder Joseph Spori in Istanbul in 1884. This was when American missionary activities in the Empire were at their climax and the Armenian nationalists were preparing to establish the main revolutionary societies which developed the antagonism between the Turks and Armenians, and eventually, breed the bloodshedding conflicts. Undoubtedly the beginning of the incidences can also be attributed to numbers of other causes stretching from economic to imperialistic to political, etc.

The reader must keep in mind that the objective of this article is not to argue on the causes or the consequences of the conflicts between the Turks and Armenians, subjects of the same Empire. It is an attempt to open a different and a comparative dimension to researchers of the issue by displaying some views of American



Mormon missionaries, developed during their mission in Ottoman lands. The Mormons were deprived of the support of their Government, moreso, even politically and socially rejected at home. Unlike the Protestant American missionaries, this saved them from political involvements to the Armenian issue. The below abstracts from what their missionaries in the Ottoman Empire have conveyed to their headquarters as their impressions of Turks, Turkey and the Armenian incidences are more indifferent and as will be viewed, certainly do not focus on criticizing the Ottoman administration or reflecting their mistreatment of the Armenians, as claimed in the others'.

### **Mormon Missionaries In the Otoman Empire**

The arrival of the Mormon missionaries in the Ottoman Empire was some sixty years after the American Protestant missionaries, so, they were not as ignorant about the Empire as were their compatriots, back in the 1820s. However, they probably did not have a high opinion of the Turks, possibly due to impressions related by the Protestant American missionaries. Nevertheless, their opinions started to change as they established favorable relations with state authorities they contacted in order to secure official grounds for their presence in the Empire. As a matter of fact, they even started to compare the ill treatment they were exposed to back home with the fine reception they had from Ottoman officials and the Turks. One of the pioneering Mormon missionaries, Elder Tanner, soon after his arrival in Istanbul expressed his opinion about the Turks as "After all, they are the most honest and moral of the Orientals. Like the Mormons, however, they have been wonderfully misrepresented!"<sup>2</sup>

**In Istanbul, Mormon missionaries first sought for opportunities to introduce Mormonic principles to Turks.**

In Istanbul, Mormon missionaries first sought for opportunities to introduce Mormonic principles to Turks. Meanwhile, outcaseted by Protestant missionaries they refered to as "American missionaries" they attempted to establish their own official contacts. To their surprise, they were able to reach even the uppermost authorities. Elder Hintze,

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<sup>2</sup> Millenial Star, 22 June, 1886

following a visit to the grand vezir was accepted by Munif Paşa, the Minister of Public Education and was assured that the government would not interfere with the Mormon missionaries as long as they did not attempt to mormonize the Turks.<sup>3</sup>

Realizing that the revelation of their contacts with the Turks could jeopardize their stay in the Ottoman Empire, they took up labor among the Armenians. They tried to tempt the Armenians by talking about financial opportunities Utah offered to Mormons. As a matter of fact, some confessed that "money bought many converts". Elder Charles Locander specifying Armenian indifference about religion mentioned that some Armenians they preached straight forwardly asked how much they would be paid if baptized.<sup>4</sup>

Missionary Tanner, also accepted and much impressed by Münif Paşa, whose actual interests lied in the educational rather than the religious aspect of the missionaries, carefully noted his parley with the Minister and included "He could not comprehend why the United States should persecute the Mormons as the Americans boasted of their great political and religious liberty".<sup>5</sup>

Actually, the friction between the two groups of American missionaries was to the point that as one of the Mormon missionaries, Fred Staufer noted in his journal, the Potestant missionaries forbade their congregations to visit the Mormons.<sup>6</sup> The resentful attitude of their compatriots must have diverted the Mormons to develop a better understanding of the Turks for their recorded impressions do not bear the bitterness viewed in those of the American Protestant missionaries'. For example, below is a passage reflecting Missionary Tanner's impressions of the Turks, titled "Who Can be So Polite and Courteaus As a Turk" from History of the Turkish Mission:

"I have often wanted to write you something about the domestic life and institutions of the Turks, but I have been among them only about eight months, and I did not wish to expose myself in a nonsensical way about people much talked of, and I am thus far convinced grossly misrepresented. During

<sup>3</sup> Provo Archives, Msf 696, No.1 6 April, 1888

<sup>4</sup> Desert News, 22 May, 1889

<sup>5</sup> CRmh 14450, Vol.I, 13 July, 1886

<sup>6</sup> Journal of Fred Staufer, 19 July, 1850, CRmh 14250, Vol.I

odd moments, and by way of change of work as a rest, I have read some eight volumes on the peoples of Turkey-the Turkish harem –meaning the “holy”, is an object of much comment. The “haremlik” is the women’s apartment, and the “selamlık” is the men’s apartment. The harem is not an institution of polygamy, but a religious or race institution, and belongs to every household. Polygamy is little practiced in Turkey, still it is an acknowledged institution. All women wear a veil that conceals most of the face except the eyes, though among many of the modern beauties it is so thin- made of such light muslin – that the features can be distinctly seen through it. The Turkish woman by no means is a slave; indeed she enjoys many more privileges in her harem than European women do in their homes. Like many of their European sisters, they have a mind of their own and they are not afraid to let it be known. But Turkish women do not associate in any way with men, except their immediate relatives or husbands. .... Free association of men and women as among the Europeans is unknown to the Turks..... The men have their gatherings and amusements to themselves, and the women, likewise. If there is any truth whatever in the saying that “Virtue is the absence of temptation”, the Turks are vastly superior morally to the Europeans. I have formed the acquaintance of a German foreign correspondent of Berlin, Hamburg and Vienna newspapers. He has been in this country a great number of years, and has lived in Turkish families. His ideas, though embodied in those of most Europeans of considerable experience here with whom I have talked, are probably the most definite and best formulated. He has repeatedly asserted that the Turks are vastly more moral respecting women than Europeans. His theory is that if the Turks had more of that passion which, while it has developed Europe intellectually, has made its moral status so low, they would be superior to what they now are. A few of the Turks, however, practice polygamy, and that furnishes the literary artist materials to paint all sorts of pictures. Probably no city in the world presents on its surface a worse spectacle of fallen women of Christendom and Judaism than this. One often hears stories of the grossest immorality of the Turks, and he hears them just as often contradicted. There are many curious customs among the people here, and they furnish literary men and newspaper correspondents, stopping a few weeks here, stuff for many silly and nonsensical stories.

You know there is considerable political speculation about this country, and there are men here, politicians, who have made in the past and expect in the future to make money out of European interferences. There are many things I cannot praise among the Turks in their administration of affairs; but because a lets the weeds grow up in the garden, it is no excuse that B should rob him of it. The Turkish Question, or the Eastern Question as it is more generally called is weak Turkey. The Greeks want European Turkey, the Russians would like Constantinople, and England is planting strong interests here. The Germans are strongly represented, and Bismarck to-day has his fingers deepest in the pie of Turkish politics, and his influence is great with the government. England has been a greater enemy to Turkey than Russia. Russia is our awoved enemy in her attempts to enforce her pan-Slavic schemes, but England has been an enemy in the disguise of a friend-has inflicted internal wounds that are more difficult to heal than external ones inflicted by Russia.”<sup>7</sup>

If we leave aside the favorable comments of a Mormon missionary about Harem (since Mormons were polygamist), this abstract holds an analysis about the Ottoman Empire of 1886 and the Turks, through the eyes of an American. What should be noted is that it is not designed to invite hostility or contain degrading critisizms and evaluations of Turkish practices frequently observed among the documents of Protestant American missionaries.

Naturally not all of the missionaries’ writings praised the Turks. However, their complains generally culminated around the restrictions of Abdulhamit II’s absolutist reign. They specifically pointed out to points such as the sanctioning required for practices of different beliefs, the serious censor applied to all publications and restrictions for such instruments as typewriters, for they prevented the observation of individuality of handwritings and telephones, with the fear that they would be used for conspirations against the government.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> 1886, 31 July, SLC/CRmh14250 Vol.I, Turkey Mission

<sup>8</sup> Desert News, April 25, 1908 (Possibly, these impressions were of an earlier date, however, their appearance in Salt Lake City journals are after the conclusion of Abdülhamit II’s absolutism, by his disposition.

**Impressions related in the correspondences of the later Mormon missionaries, particularly of those serving in the Ottoman Empire during the time of deportation and the First World War were also different from the Americans'.**

Impressions related in the correspondences of the later Mormon missionaries, particularly of those serving in the Ottoman Empire during the time of deportation and the First World War were also different from the Americans'. Mormons' independence from being the agents of American foreign policy in the Middle East even reflected in the writings of their Armenian converts. Most of these Armenian converts wrote their testimonies or notes after they migrated to the United States, which means they had nothing to fear from expressing their true feelings. Yet what they wrote were mostly simple history or their personal lives. As it will be observed in the lengthy passages deliberately given in the examples below,<sup>9</sup> although they sometimes contained incorrect verdicts (as is seen in the first), which the authors resorted to for reflecting negative opinions of the Ottoman administration, this was not very frequent. In other words, they were not written to incite hatred and hostility between the two people who, for centuries, have coexisted peacefully.

The first example is, from "A short History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints in The Middle East" by Abraham Handoian, an Armenian who was born in Aleppo and later immigrated to Salt Lake City where he lived for 60 years until he passed away in the 1970s. The short text begins with a retrospect to the initial steps of Mormon missionaries in the Ottoman Empire:

"The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints first came into contact with the Middle East when, on October 1841, Welder Orson Hyde dedicated the Holy Land for the return of the Jews. Since that time the Church has sent missionaries to that area to preach the Gospel to the Christian people there, especially the Armenian people, whose long heritage (theirs was the first nation to fully embrace Christianity) made them receptive to the message of the restoration."

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<sup>9</sup> These examples are documents from the Brigham Young University Archives in Provo, Utah.

“Active missionay work began with the arrival of Elder F.F. Hintze in Istanbul, Turkey in 1888. At that time, Turkish was the only language legally in the use throughout the Turkish Empire. Penalty for the use of any other language was the loss of the offending person’s tongue. Consequently, the Armenian people spoke Turkish, and brother Hintze studied this language. He became very proficient in it, and, using Armenian characters, translated the Book of Mormon into the Turkish language.”

The second paragraph is sufficient to indicate the biased, antagonistic attitude the author nourished towards the Ottoman administrators, for sources on Ottoman history very clearly underline Ottoman tolerance displayed and the linguistic, religious and traditional liberties granted to different communities within the Empire. Nevertheless, Hindoian did not bother to write about any of the pre-1915 Turco Armenian conflicts and incidences we read about. Mentioning the First World War and the 1915 relocation he gave the much argued Armenian death toll as one and a half million. However, he indicated that this figure included those killed by hunger and disease as well.

Hindoian continued by mentioning that at the end of the war, in 1918, the surviving relocated Armenians returned to their homes and the members of the Mormon Church were gathered, organized and reactivated.<sup>10</sup>

He concluded the part of his memoirs about the Ottoman Empire with noting deprivations applicable to all, and the post-war developments in his region prior to Mormons’ migration to Syria:

“Peace did not last long. The Turks began fighting the French in the Aintab area, as Aintab was in the French mandate, and the Truks wanted to expell the French. The Armenians began allying themselves with the European power, and they were consequently hated and killed by the Turks whenever and wherever they were caught. During this time, there was little food and clothing for the members, and they experienced a terrible time. At times, the people had to eat the leaves of trees. Fortunately, only two members were injured during the hostilities.”

Reuben Ouzounian, an Antep born Armenian was another member of the LDS Church who migrated to Salt Lake City in

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<sup>10</sup> BYU Archives, Provo, Utah.

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1955. His Orthodox Gregorian family accepted Mormonism in 1896, when he was four years old. Ouzounian, in his testimony, did not mention the Turco-Armenian conflicts prior or during the First World War. Moreso, after explaining his father's rug business, he

referred to the war and hardships of the time with only the following few sentences:

"We had very hard times during the first war. My Dad passed away with (colera)(sic) disease, all the responsibility was upon my shoulders. My brother, Carle, could hardly manage by himself having few looms himself. We remained in Aintab, Turkey because of our rug business. The Turks never let us leave the country because of our business in the year 1915. I went into the army while my sisters ran the business themselves..."

This last sentence of the above paragraph in Ouzounian's notes is an indication to the fact that not all Armenians (especially those not involved in actions against the state and simply continued their business) were relocated.

Another Mormon, Hagop (Tumas) Thomas Gagosian, an Armenian who was born in Zara (Sivas), in his 19 page diary first wrote about his parents' marriage as he explained in detail Armenian marriage traditions, almost identical with the Ottoman Turks'. On later pages, he gave lengthy accounts on the introduction of Mormonism in Zara, the opening of the first Mormon church there on 6th of October, 1888; conversion of his family to Mormonism and alliance to the LDS Church, his baptism in 1894, his own marriage and his professional experiences on different practices from hair-cutting to plastering .

Gagosian's notes continued:

"I had been active in Hunchagian party. This party secretly worked against the government because the government had mistreated the Armenians. I went to the Chairman of the party and asked him to release me of my duties on account of my new religion (Mormonism). I did not believe as I used to. He held a meeting with the other members. They decided they

could not release me. If they did they feared I might reveal some of our secrets to the government. Some of them advised the leader to get rid of me. They figured it was better for one man to die than the whole party loose their lives. The leader was a good friend of mine. He told them he'd never do that but he could not convince many of the others that course of action was not best because many were afraid of their own lives. My friend, the leader, came to me and advised me to leave the country as soon as possible because he did not know how long he could stop the party from doing something drastic. There was not much to do but to leave the country ...."

He continued by relating how, after this development, his concern for personal safety added to desire to learn more about Mormonism and took him to Utah after a long journey through many Turkish cities and Cyprus, where he stopped to join his Armenian acquaintances, and worked for some time. The island, as he wrote, was under British control at that time. Gagosian wrote that "...Years ago, when the Greeks owned this Island, they mistreated the Armenians so they say that the Armenians opened one of the gates and let the Turks in for which the Turks gave them some land and an old church."

His notes later include his days in Utah and return to Turkey, in 1898, with a group of Mormons after "F.F. Hintze convinced me that I should go back with them because when they colonized the Armenian Mormons over there I would be here alone".

The later pages of Gagosian's notes contained details of the time he spent in the Ottoman Empire until 1910, when he returned to the United States for a permanent stay. The diary concluded with his mostly family life in the United States until he passed away in 1952.

It is in the part on his stay in Cyprus, while trying to escape from the Hunchak threat that, in approximately half a page, he mentioned the incidences between the Turks and Armenians: He wrote of hearing orders "to massacre Armenians" and the Turks' ill treatment and receiving the news about his family's safety that a Turkish woman had saved his son's life by risking her own.

There are parts in all of the above examples and other documents referring to the hardships and poverty suffered, and these were reflected as the main reason why the Armenian converts wanted to immigrate to the United States, where they



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... were promised a prosperous life by the Mormon Church. Yet, depreviations which undoubtedly multiplied by wars, were not what the Mormons or Armenians alone had to endure, but as mentioned before, were applicable to all Ottomans suffering from the brunts of the economic decline of the state. Nevertheless, the end of the First World War became a turning point for the LDS Near East Mission. The Mormons abandoned their imperialistic ambitions in Turkey, and discontinued their missionary activities at the begining of the Turkish Indepedence War. However, the Armenian converts they took to Salt Lake City, in the course of time justified the remark Elder Charles Locander made in the begining of Mormon missionary experiences in the Ottoman Empire, "money bought many converts"<sup>11</sup> and became astounch advocators of the anti-Turkish political polemics of Armenian propagandists.

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<sup>11</sup> Desert News, May 30, 1889

# THE IMPLIED MESSAGE OF ARARAT AND ITS INTENDED AUDIENCE

Prof. Dr. Nedret KURAN-BURÇOĞLU\*

## I. Introductory Notes

The well known Canadian film director of Armenian origin Atom Egoyan's film *Ararat* (Ağrı Dağı) is going to be in the theaters soon, this year. The film has been publicized, reviewed and discussed widely in America and in Europe before it is shown to the public. This can be taken as an indication of a partial fulfillment of the film's goal, namely to draw the attention of a large audience to the Armenian issue. Its talented director, its carefully selected cast who are very well-known actors and actresses to the European and American public, comprising Charles Aznavour, Bruce Greenwood, Christopher Plummer, Eric Bogosian, Elias Koteas, David Alpay, Raffi Migdesyan and Arsinée Khanjian, as well as the substantial amount of financial support the film has received from Canadian, French and Armenian sources will contribute to its success as envisaged by the film's initiators.

These preparations show that *Ararat* is a carefully designed film that is intended to be the most effective stroke of a larger strategy some Armenians have been working on to prove their hypothesis of the so-called "Armenian genocide" to the whole world. The timing of the film also seems to be intentionally chosen for this purpose, which will be discussed later. A close analysis of *Ararat's* film script has revealed, that this film is a significant example from the point of view of its image-creating, image-reinforcing and stereotyping strategies that already started to show their effect during its filming process which is planned to continue during its show and even more so at its reception phase by particular audiences of the world to which the film is intended to appeal.

This paper attempts to look closely at the three phases of this larger phenomenon, by analysing which image-creating, stereotyping and image-propagating methods and mechanisms

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**There is no doubt that the major intention of the film Ararat is to present this event to the general public from the Armenian perspective, convince the multipliers, and receive support from the decision-making mechanisms in the world to put pressure on Turkey to have the so-called genocide recognized.**

have been instrumentalized during the filming process, how these mechanisms have been combined with cinematic effects and integrated within the film, and what sort of impact is envisaged on different individual audiences at the reception phase of this film.

## II. The Film

The film *Ararat* is a palimpsest of different layers in terms of symbols, imagery, themes and scenes, and there is a continuous shift from one layer to the other from the beginning to the end, setting up links between the tragic past of the Armenians in Van, Turkey, during the World War I, at the second decade of the twentieth century, and their presence in the migrated country, that is the United States of America, and finally their present lives in Canada, i.e. between their memories of the past linked with their former motherland, and the reality they experience now in their present country, that is Canada. While these shifts are taking place, something is tried to be kept alive and this is the main theme of the film, the so-called "Armenian genocide" that is claimed to have happened in Van, Turkey, in 1915, during World War I, which the Turkish government refuses to recognize. It is made clear in the film that as this is not recognized by the Turkish government as a "committed crime", it remains an unresolved issue and a pain in the hearts and minds of the Armenians. And there is no doubt that the major intention of the film *Ararat* is to present this event to the general public from the Armenian perspective, convince the multipliers, and receive support from the decision-making mechanisms in the world to put pressure on Turkey to have the so-called genocide recognized. To achieve this goal, the following methods and mechanisms have been skillfully mobilized in the film.

### **The Question of Legitimacy: "Illusion" or "Reality?"**

The "genocide" theme is repeated throughout the film with "as a matter of 'accepted' fact" attitude, but at the same time its truthfulness is tried to be secured through various means. One of the major devices that are used to achieve this is the first sentence of the film: "a true story about living proof", meaning, that the film is not an "illusion" or a fiction, but a "true story". As it is later on told to the audience, the film is based on a book of an American missionary, called Clarence Ussher, who had been in Van during the relocation of the Armenians by the Turkish Government in 1915, and who had published his memoirs after he returned home, in Boston, in 1917. By showing this book as a reliable source, and a respectable American as its author as the alibi of the horrible events, that are claimed to have happened to the Armenians, in 1915-1916 in Turkey, the director aims to justify first, the truthfulness of the "genocide" and second, to gain the sympathy of the Americans to the film and its theme in particular, and that of the larger audience in general.

### **Ensuring Justification: Representation of the Turk as the "Villain"**

Other effective tools that are used in the film to convince the audience about the truthfulness of the so-called "genocide" are the horrible scenes that are carefully integrated within the film, some of them signifying the deportation of the Armenian crowds that are shown walking in Anatolian deserts in destitute wrapped in rugs, others showing corpses of hundreds of Armenians spread on the ground and hanging on sticks while hungry children and dogs are running among them and still others, that show how the innocent Armenian women are raped in front of their children, burned alive and how Armenian children are brutally tortured by the Turks.

### **Reinforcing Historical Stereotypes: The Turk as the "Enemy of Christianity"**

These are extremely sensational heart-breaking scenes that are intended to be carved in the visual memory of the audiences. In all these scenes the Turks are represented as "brutal species" and "ferocious beings", who would make no distinction between men and women, adults and children and would torture and kill them

**European audiences will easily associate this image with a negative Turkish stereotype that has commonly been used throughout Europe for centuries.**

all in cold blood. European audiences will easily associate this image with a negative Turkish stereotype that has commonly been used throughout Europe for centuries, in various literary and especially in visual sources that range from altar figures to illustrations in popular Medieval literature. The book of the German philistine Hans Sachs from Byzantian letters provoking the European public to Crusades against the Turks to a series of speeches of the German Protestant leader Martin Luther who was trying to gain supporters for his version of interpretation of Christianity. All these examples, that can be seen as both, cause and effect of xenophobia, reflect a common pattern, namely they all strive to gain supporters *vis a vis* the "other",<sup>1</sup> that is in these cases an enemy of one's own, that has to be shown as a monster, combining all sorts of negative characteristics and should therefore be commonly considered as a threat for one's own existence and who therefore must be fought against together. However, "brutality" alone has not always been a sufficient motive to convince others to become allies against the Turk in European history, and very often a more effective motive has been sought for and found, and this has usually been the "other's" religion, that is Islam. So the Turk has been shown as a "heretic", "infidel", or as "believing in a different God"-which is rather deceptive- and as an "enemy of Christianity"- which is not true! This is also the case in the film Ararat: The Turk is not graceful, he doesn't pray before the meals, as he "worships to a different God". By alluding to the already existing, historical negative cliché about the Turk in European and Christian minds, Egoyan seems to reinforce this stereotype with a provision to gain himself supporters and legitimacy for his previously mentioned goal.

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<sup>1</sup> Actually the "Other" doesn't necessarily have to signify the "enemy". The "other" is in reality the "different one" who can as well "complement the self", that is, contribute to and complete the self. In short, the "Other" doesn't have to exhibit only negative characteristics, it can as well exhibit positive aspects. As long as human beings can not discern between these different capacities of the "other" and try to appreciate them, peace among the human race can and will not be established.

### **Arousing the Sympathy of the Audience: Linking Christian Imagery with the Text**

Christian elements are skillfully integrated into the film to arouse the emotions of the public. A multilayered Christian imagery is used throughout the film, that focuses on a "mother and son image". This starts with a figure of Madonna and Christ

**Christian elements are skillfully integrated into the film to arouse the emotions of the public.**

carved on the wall of the church in Aghtamar, in Van, continues with a photograph of Sushan and her son Arshile Gorky, who later becomes a famous painter in New York. The photograph was taken in Van, in 1912, with the purpose to be sent to the father Gorky who apparently sensed the so-called Armenian "genocide" a few years in advance, and migrated to the USA to prepare a future for his family. This photograph then gives inspiration to the artist Arshile Gorky, who makes a painting in his house, in New York, in 1935 depicting the same scene. This connotes to a loyalty of the artist to the Armenian common past, as promised by him to his dying mother in Van, in 1915. The artist later on, decides to erase the hands of his mother from the painting indicating to the addressees, that something is missing here, which obviously signifies the unresolved Armenian issue that is mentioned above. The image of the mother's affectionate hand also alludes to the healing hand of the Jesus Christ which symbolizes miracles. The fourth layer of this imagery is found in Ani's book, depicting Arshile Gorky's life from which Ani reads excerpts to her students in her history of art class. The fifth layer of it comes to the fore in Ani's lecture at the art gallery, in which she mentions the wall carvings in the church in Aghtamar in connection with the photograph of the "mother and son", and the painting of Arshile Gorky. The sixth layer of the image reveals itself in the Saroyan's film, that is the film which is filmed within the film Ararat, that combines this multilayered imagery with the story found in the American missionary Clarence Ussher's book and completes the film within the film. The mother in this imagery, who represents the past, had the following three last requests from her son, who represents the future, before she died in his arms: he should not forget his language, he should not forget his religion, he should never forget what had happened in 1915 – 1916 to the Armenians in Turkey and should always keep it on the agenda. Coincidentally,

**The film's name is intentionally chosen as Ararat which signifies on the one hand, the lost "motherland" for the Armenians who now live in the "diaspora", and on the other hand, it alludes to the biblical story of Noah's Ark.**

Edward Saroyan's, the film director's mother had the same last requests from her son which are shown to signify a common mission of the younger generation of the Armenians that had been handed over to them by their ancestors and which is waiting to be fulfilled. This powerful imagery of the "mother and son", that is repeated in every instance of the film, will naturally appeal to the emotions and the common conscience of a large audience who may easily identify themselves with the corresponding figures and feel sympathy for them.

**Biblical and Mythological Symbols and their Connotations:  
Pomegranate; Mount Ararat and Noah's Ark**

The film's name is intentionally chosen as Ararat which signifies on the one hand, the lost "motherland" for the Armenians who now live in the "diaspora", and on the other hand, it alludes to the biblical story of Noah's Ark. As it is a well-known biblical story, Noah's Ark which was designed to rescue human race from being wiped out of the earth by a terrible storm, had disappeared on the mount Ararat, but people still believe that one day its remnants will be found. Noah's Ark, and the Mount Ararat which is still hiding the former in itself are used metaphorically here, i.e. as a shelter for the Armenians to keep them from being wiped out of the earth by the terrible storm, that is the "genocide". There are two major references in the film to these symbols. David, the customs officer, who is a pious Christian, buys his grandson a Noah's Ark as a birthday present and tells him the story related to it. This makes the audience ready for the association of the events in the film with the biblical story. The second reference is more powerful and noteworthy: By looking at the huge representation of Mount Ararat Edward says, "Mount Ararat. When I was a boy, my mother used to tell me this was ours, even though it was far away. I used to dream of a way to approach it, to make it belong to who I was...to who I became. Will this film bring us closer?" This passage, in which Edward – as a human being - reflects upon the

link between his identity formation and his belongingness to a desired land, which is voiced in the film by Edward - the film's producer - himself, implies very clearly the ultimate intention of the film's initiators, namely the fulfillment of the four phased strategy of the Armenian dream, as well as reveals what function this film is expected to fulfill.

Another symbol used in the film is the pomegranate, a fruit which Edward tries to bring into the country, but he is refused to get it in. However, as he is a "smart" man, he finds a "clever" solution, he cuts the fruit open, takes the seeds into his mouth and smuggles them into the country without overruling the custom's law. The pomegranate signifies "luck", "blessing" and "patience". Edward's mother used to eat it, seed by seed, and consoled herself as if each seed had meant a meal when they had nothing to eat. The message here is the following; even in tough situations there is always a way out if you have the necessary tools and if you can play the game according to its rules. All you need is "patience" and "smartness" which the characters of the film have. By this the film is attempting to give hope and optimism to those who have been striving to reach their final goal, that is to those who have such dreams like the one expressed by Edward above, but also encourage those who haven't thought about such a goal yet.

### **Juxtaposing Armenian and Turkish Characters: Stereotyping Continued**

It is important to note that almost all the Armenian characters in the film are shown in a positive light. They are assigned the following qualities:

**Edward Saroyan:** Elegant, respectable, speaking with French accent, very famous film producer.

**Ani:** Art historian, writer of a book on Arshile Gorky, professor, intellectual qualities.

**Rouben:** The screen writer, an intense (?) looking man, he has worked on this film for five years, a meticulous researcher.

**Martin:** Handsome leading man, playing the part of the American missionary Clarence Ussher.

**Raffi:** Ani's son, handsome young man, trying to find his identity, inquisitive, exemplifying human characteristics.



**Celia:** Attractive young woman, Ani's stepdaughter, can not get along with her stepmother, has a love-affair with Raffi, inquisitive.

**Arshile Gorky:** Famous Armenian painter, survivor of the genocide, loyal to his promises, conscious of his mission.

**Sushan:** Arshile Gorky's mother, who died of hunger in the arms of her son, in Van and had given her son a mission.

**Raffi's father:** Ani's husband, a member of ASALA who died in an attempt of killing a Turkish diplomat, he is "terrorist" for certain people, but a "freedom-fighter" for others.

**Celia's father:** Ani's husband, "died in a stupid accident"-this is Ani's version of interpretation of the event-, "committed suicide because of Ani"- this is Celia's opinion-.

**Sevan:** The photographer's son, slightly younger than Arshile, very sympathetic young boy who is tortured by the Mayor of Van.

**David:** Custom's officer, observes Christian rituals, shows human characteristics.

**Philip:** David's son, security guard at the art gallery, has a gay relationship with Ali, he has lost his confidence in God.

**Tony:** David's grandson, Philip's son, he receives advice from his pious grandfather.

**Janet:** Attractive young woman, Tony's mother.

**Ali:** Philip's gay friend, half-Turk, he is easily convinced to play the part of Cevdet Bey, the Mayor of Van as he feels honoured to act in a film made by Saroyan. He is actually used as a "tool" in return of a bottle of champagne by Edward to fulfill a certain function and then simply thrown away.

As it can be observed from the descriptions of the characters, all Armenian types in the film are either "intellectual", "artistically talented", "smart", and/or "elegant", "graceful", "good-looking", "attractive", "sympathetic" and "human" types. On the other hand, the only Turkish -half Turkish - character of the film who is Ali, is "gay", "ambivalent", "senseless", "ignorant of the events that are taking place around him", or would "care less", and who would "use the same discourse of the Turkish government" considering the issue of the so-called Armenian "genocide", ie. interpreting the events that happened in Van, in 1915-16, that is the deaths of both nations, Armenians and Turks, as the natural circumstances

of a war, of World War I. Then there is also the Mayor of Van, Cevdet Bey in the film within the film, whose part is acted by Ali as well. This is a worse character who is described by Raffi as someone who was placed in Van to "carry out the elimination of the Armenian race". Other horrible Turks are indirectly present in the film with their massacres and crimes that are extensively exhibited throughout the film. These "black and white characterizations" of the film exhibit a clear negative stereotyping of the Turks that is juxtaposed with the positive stereotyping of the Armenians which reflects the sheer prejudice and hostility of the film's director and producer against the Turks. This aspect actually reduces the reliability of the film and its director in the eyes of a critical audience and can thus be considered as one of the major fallacies of the film from the aesthetic point of view as well.

**Attempts of Gaining New Allies against the Turks:  
Equating the So-called "Genocide" with the "Holocaust"**

Another strategy the film director is applying in the film is to gain the sympathy of ethnic groups and nations who have suffered under discrimination, xenophobia and racism in their past, as these groups are considered as "potential supporters" of other groups who claim to have suffered from similar animosities. In this film the Jews, who are known to have suffered from the Holocaust and are, thus, vulnerable in that respect, are targetted and are

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expected to identify themselves with the Armenians and support their strategic aims. To achieve this, the case of the Armenians in Van in 1915-16 is associated with the case of the Jews under the Nazi Regime and in the concentration camps in Dachau, Auschwitz and Treblinka in World War II. The choice of this unfortunate association, which is strongly argued about and criticised by historians, could also have the following motive; to make peace with the Jews - who constituted another *millet*

within the Ottoman Empire and with whom the Armenians did not have friendly relationships in history. However, getting the support of the influential Jewish lobby in the Western World must have been considered a great challenge for the film. A final note should be added here: while reminding the sad stories in history and appealing to the sympathy of the Jews, the film doesn't want to offend the Germans who might feel excluded from the audience by being reminded of the Holocaust. It must be for this reason that a German woman was also shown as an alibi for the so-called genocide.

### **Transformation of Opinions of the Armenian Youth: From Scepticism to Prejudice**

At the beginning of the film the young characters don't seem to be very much involved within the so-called "genocide" issue, they would rather be interested in their own daily lives and the problems that are related to it, such as love affairs, step-mother/step-daughter relationships, family fights, divorce issues, mutual accusations, etc. It can be said that especially Raffi has a naive approach to everything that is going on around him, he is a young man with good will. In time he realizes that he has to go to

Aghtamar and shoot a film of the environment to help the film makers complete the film with scenes depicting the original space, as they could not get a permission from the Turkish authorities to shoot this film in Van. To do this job he

**This event adds to the negative stereotype of the Turk the following aspects, "bribery" and "drug-dealing".**

has to bribe the local authorities by promising them to take the tins they give him to Canada. However, the contents of these tins turn out to be drugs that may have caused Raffi a great trouble in the customs of Canada, but the Canadian custom's officer who is represented in the film as a pious Christian and an affectionate man, suspected and in the end realized that the tins contained illegal substance, let Raffi go, as he felt great sympathy for the young man after having listened to his sad story. This event adds to the negative stereotype of the Turk the following aspects, "bribery" and "drug-dealing". Actually the latter act, which is also commonly ascribed to the Armenians, is in the film projected to the Turks.

Towards the end of the film, after watching Ali's act of the Mayor of Van, Raffi also gets convinced about the truth of the so-called "genocide".

Celia passes through another development, but arrives at a similar conclusion. With these developments of minds of Raffi and Celia, who are planned to represent the Armenian youth today, the director aims to show that the message is relayed to the younger generation who at first had second thoughts about this issue because they were naive and good-willed, but in the end they also get convinced about the evil deeds of the Turks. The second message is that the Turks have not changed. They are bad as ever.

### **Seeking Justification for "Terrorism": The ASALA Case**

Raffi's father was an ASALA terrorist and died while trying to shoot a Turkish diplomat. This case is also brought up several times in the film, as it is an often discussed phenomenon and is actually considered a stigma in the history of the Armenians. These "acts of terrorism" that targeted the Turkish government in its representatives, that is its diplomats, are tried to be shown in the film as a "fight for freedom" for which the young generation is encouraged. It should be asked here: Which freedom? And what was the impact of these events on the Turco-Armenian relationships? What is the use of pursuing this vendetta?

### **III. The Reception of the Film**

The well-known Italian semiotician Umberto Eco talks about the "Modell Reader" in his book called *The Role of the Reader*. By this Eco means a special kind of reader<sup>2</sup> the author wants to appeal. After having decided for his "Modell Reader" the author screens out the others by applying certain strategies in his text,<sup>3</sup> such as using a special register, a certain style and may be an encoded language the "Modell Reader" only can decode. In this way the message reaches its target and the text will be completed in the way the author had originally planned. Naturally there will also be other readers, who may read the text and even enjoy it to a certain extent without getting the concealed message of the author, just

<sup>2</sup> The concept "reader" is used here in its broader sense, meaning the actual receivers / addressees of the book/ the film.

<sup>3</sup> The concept "text" is used as a general term here, indicating any kind of art product - literary, visual, audio-visual - that can be read, i.e. decoded, interpreted and understood. Thus the film is seen as a "text" here.

as most of the readers of the Name of the Rose - Eco's famous work- did, who had been intrigued by the idea that the film was a detective story that took place in the Middle Ages without getting the subtle critical message the author of the book actually wanted to convey. However, large audiences are always welcome for the authors, as well as for the producers, and for this reason they do not question whether all receivers have got the envisaged message of the "text" or not. On the contrary, they will enjoy the reception of their work by large audiences. However, the main issue for them is to capture the real "Modell Reader" who would get the intended message of the "text".

With its "Modell Readers"/"target audiences", "intended messages", "encoding/ decoding processes, etc. "Reception" has

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always been a delicate phenomenon that has been analysed and discussed by many theoreticians and critics of social sciences, experts in communication, media and cultural studies, from Hans Gadamer and Hans Robert Jauss to Umberto Eco, from Juri Lotman to Stanley Fish many well-known scholars have dwelled upon it. They all agree that all authors of books, directors of films and artists of paintings have certain audiences in their mind while creating their work. They expect a certain response, a certain attitude from their audiences, and integrate their intended message accordingly within the text they create. Art works among the different sorts of text types have a different nature and function than the so-called "informative", "operational" or "provocative" texts, which either aim to give information/teach, explain or provoke their readers. Art works have to exhibit higher aesthetic and human values that make them unique and universal, and they have to serve higher functions, such as giving their audience pleasure and happiness, inducing in them the feeling of peace, elevating them to a spiritually higher dimension, or inviting them to reflect upon certain issues that can be improved from which humanity would benefit.

A close reading of the screenscript of Ararat, from this point of view, gives the reader very clear clues about the intended readers of the film, as it screens out certain readers while appealing to certain others. Following this it can be inferred that the message is

also targetted to this particular intended audience. As it has been elaborated upon above this is an elite Western audience, comprising Christians, Jews, Armenians-especially the younger generation of them and most important of all the "decision making mechanisms" of the whole world that can be mobilized against the Turks and the Turkish government in the decisions that are waiting for to be taken for or against Turkey. Naturally other audiences that are not the "Model Readers" are also welcome who will watch the film without a critical approach and who will therefore be swept away by the scenes in the film and help popularizing the film to a larger audience by writing supportive articles and reviews without realizing their ethical responsibilities for the peace in the world.

#### IV. Concluding Remarks

The film directors and authors of books can naturally be inspired by the history, and especially by their own history which should be respected. However, they should be very careful before claiming that they are "reflecting the true history" in their work as this may be misleading, and can lead to hazardous effects for human relationships which the film Ararat also seems to lead. The historical facts should be researched by the historians and discussed at different platforms. In short, subjective interpretations of critical historical events should not be imposed on audiences as a one-way broadcast. This is an irresponsible attitude and is considered unethical. As the historians claim, the film is full of misconceptions, misrepresentations and one-sided interpretations of the historical events that took place in 1915-16, which may enhance the feelings of hatred in the Armenians, that

**These two communities, the Turks and the Armenians have been living in peace together in Turkey for many years and have developed friendly relationships.**

the film indicates to exist, and also induce a reluctance in the Turks to co-operate with their fellow Armenians. Actually these two communities, the Turks and the Armenians have been living in peace together in Turkey for many years and have developed friendly relationships. This fact seems to be overlooked and underestimated by a group of Armenians, i.e. the makers of this film, who live in the diaspora and don't seem to care what their relatives think about this issue who live in

Turkey. Thus their irresponsible move may harm the existing Turco-Armenian dialogue.

The timing of the film is another important issue that has to be mentioned here. The time seems to be intentionally chosen. Ararat is filmed at a time when Europe is discussing Turkey's integration to the European Union and when Turkey has developed relatively positive relationships with the United States of America. The film aims to add new questionmarks about the Turks to the minds of the Western world in general, and to the decision making mechanisms in it in particular. It may even succeed to a certain extent in its goal, but a critical eye – and there will be many in a large audience - will easily figure out this intention, even if it is well concealed, and realize that the intended audience is being tried to be misled and betrayed with the feelings of hatred, xenophobia, racism and provocation, as well as tried to be convinced that "terrorism" is "freedom fighting". It is a great pity that such a talented film director like Atom Egoyan and his team have fallen into a fallacy and ended up with a propaganda film instead of an art work that could have contributed to the peace in the world and that could have fostered dialogue between the Armenian and Turkish communities.

# THE ASSASSINATION OF MAYOR OF VAN KAPAMACIYAN BY THE TASHNAK COMMITTEE

Dr. Hasan OKTAY\*

## Van and the Armenian Separatism

**I**t is cardinal to understand the importance of Van in order to grasp the Armenian Question. Aram Manukian, who played a leading role in the first Van revolt in 1896 and fled to Russia afterwards, returned back to the city in 1904. His primary aim was arming the local Armenians in the anticipation of another widespread revolt.

The Turks and Armenians cohabited in Van for centuries. The extremist elements within the Armenian community wanted to form an independent administration, and possibly a union with Russia. As they didn't form the majority in Van, neither in the rest of the Empire, they chose the way of 'ethnic cleansing' by organizing armed Armenian terror organizations to get rid off the local Muslim population and thereby to create an Armenian Van.

**Turks and Armenians  
cohabited in Van for  
centuries.**

Under the liberal political atmosphere following the declaration of the Second Ottoman Constitution in 1908, the post of mayor of Van was given to an Armenian from the Loyal People (millet-i sadıka), called Bedros Kapamacıyan in mid 1909.<sup>1</sup> He was a delegate of the Van board of directors. Although the city was populated overwhelmingly by Muslims, Kapamacıyan was elected thanks to the tolerance of the residents of Van without being subject to any discrimination, therefore, he received the votes of the Muslims as well. Two out of ten delegates of board of directors

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<sup>1</sup> *Teotik Salnamesi*, İstanbul 1911, p. 253; for the historical development of Turkish municipality, see; İber Ortaylı, *Tanzimattan Cumhuriyete Yerel Yönetim Geleneği*, (The Tradition of Local Government) İstanbul 1985, p. 9; Mehmet Ali Gökaçtı, *Dünyada ve Türkiye'de Belediyecilik*, (Municipality in the World and Turkey) (İstanbul: 1996); İlhan Tekeli, *Türkiye'de Belediyeciliğin Gelişimi*, (The Development of Municipality in Turkey) (Ankara: 1982).



**Kapamacıyan attempted to serve honestly for the peace and prosperity of all communities living in Van**

were elected among Armenians.<sup>2</sup> Traditionally the mayor of Van used to be elected among the Muslim delegates, as they represented the majority of the population. However, all members agreed to elect Kapamacıyan.

Consequently, he was elected unanimously. Although we do not have much information about Kapamacıyan's background,<sup>3</sup> it is commonly known that he was an outstanding member of a respected family dealing with drapery trade.<sup>4</sup>

Locals were happy with him while he served his term in office. He did not facilitate the aspirations of the Armenian Revolutionary Tashnak Committee,<sup>5</sup> which was headed by Manukian and was quite influential in Van. Kapamacıyan attempted to serve honestly for the peace and prosperity of all communities living in Van and to act always in favour of the Ottoman interests, not those of the Tashnak and Hınchak committees, which had revolutionary and separatist objectives. While Mayor Kapamacıyan was working hard for peace and for the future of the constituency, the Armenian Patriarch initiated some provocative plans for rebellion in Van and its surroundings with the Tashnak committee in order to convince the European states that the 'Armenian cause' was still alive.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>2</sup> BOA DH MÜL, nr. 23-2/23-1

<sup>3</sup> Kapamacıyan was granted a favor on 2 February 1908. BOA İrade Taltifat, 1325. Za/1.

<sup>4</sup> Teotik Salnamesi, (Istanbul: 1911), p. 253; Y. Çark, *Türk Devleti Hizmetinde Ermeniler* (Armenians in the Service of Turkey), (Istanbul: 1953), p. 175; M. Sadi Koçuş, *Tarihte Ermeniler ve Türk Ermeni İlişkileri* (Armenians in History and Turkish Armenian Relations), (Istanbul: 1990), p. 124.

<sup>5</sup> Taşnaksutyun organization was established as the alliance of Armenian revolutionary societies in 1890 in Tiflis, taking the separatist gangs in the Balkans as an example, and started its activities by soon opening branches in Istanbul, Erzurum and Van. L. Nalbantyan, *The Armenian Revolutionary Movement: The Development of Armenian Political Parties Through The Nineteenth Century*, Los Angeles 1963, p. 442; Firuz Kazemzadeh, *Russia and Britain in Persia 1864-1914, a Study in Imperialism*, London 1968, p. 527; Nejat Göyünç, *Osmanlı İdaresinde Ermeniler*, (The Armenians under the Ottoman Rule) Istanbul 1983, p. 65; Mim Kemal Öke, *Ermeni Meselesi*, (Armenian Question) Istanbul 1986, p. 95; Cevdet Küçük, *Ermeni Meselesinin Ortaya Çıkışı*, (The Beginning of the Armenian Question) Istanbul 1984, p. 100; M. Sadi Koçuş, *Tarihte Ermeniler ve Türk Ermeni İlişkileri*, (Armenians in History and the Turkish-Armenian Relations) Istanbul 1990, p. 153; for the political aspect of the committee, see Anahide Ter Minassian, "1876-1923 Döneminde Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda sosyalist hareketin doğuşunda ve gelişmesinde Ermeni topluluğunun rolü", *Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda Sosyalizm ve Milliyetçilik*, (Socialism and Nationalism in the Ottoman Empire) compiled by M. Tunçay, Erich Jan Zürcher, (Istanbul: 1995), pp. 163-238.

<sup>6</sup> When Khrimian Hairik of Van was appointed as the Patriarch of Istanbul in 1873, he aimed to take the Armenian issue to Istanbul and from there to European embassies. As the plans and sabotages starting in this way rapidly spread to Anatolia, Van was mostly the subject of such incidents. See Yves Ternos, *Ermeni Tabusu*, (The Armenian Taboo) Istanbul 1993, p. 58 quoted from Frederic Macler, *Autour de L'Armenie*,

In line with these plans, a series of fires broke out in Van in April 1912 and the houses of some Armenians were also burnt down. The Patriarch requested the mayor to report these fires to the European embassies, and inform that the Muslims were ready to destroy the properties and to kill the Armenians and that the Muslims were responsible for fires.<sup>7</sup> Contrary to what he was asked mayor Kapamacıyan prepared a report stating that this was not the case and the fires were started by the Armenian Tashnak committees. He also went to the office of Van Governor and expressed his loyalty and fidelity to the Ottoman State. The Patriarchate respectively sent out a delegation to Van immediately and tried to calm down the Mayor and conceal the incidents because Kapamacıyan was a very respected and influential man among the Armenians. His stand against the Armenian revolutionaries would have endangered those committees' activities going on.<sup>8</sup>

Consequently the revolutionary Armenian committees found the attitude of the mayor Kapamacıyan untolerable<sup>9</sup> and a decision for his assassination was taken.<sup>10</sup> The revolutionary terror gangs previously committed assassinations against Armenian leaders who supported the Ottoman interest as a whole and aimed to spread terror and eliminate any opposition, even among their own Armenian people.<sup>11</sup>

Paris 1917, p.183; also for the activities of Patriarch Khrimian, see, Esat Uras, *Tarihte Ermeniler ve Ermeni Meselesi*, (Armenians in History and the Armenian Question) (Ankara: 1996); Kamuran Gürün, *Ermeni Dosyası*, (Armenian File) (Ankara: 1988); Erdal İter, *Ermeni Kilisesi ve Terör*, (Armenian Church and Terror) (Ankara: 1999).

<sup>7</sup> BOA DH SYS 109/2-1.

<sup>8</sup> BOA DH SYS 109/2-1.

<sup>9</sup> BOA DH MUL 55-1/54 (Minutes of 5th consultation meeting on Van revolutionary society dated 18-22 March 1909. Although Anahide Ter Minassian states that this meeting was held by the Hinchak committee (Anahide Ter Minassian, "1876-1923 Döneminde Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda sosyalist hareketin doğuşunda ve gelişmesinde Ermeni topluluğun rolü", (The Role of the Armenian Community in the Beginning and the Development of the Socialist Movement) Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda Sosyalizm ve Milliyetçilik, (Socialism and Nationalism in the Ottoman Empire) compiled by M. Tunçay, Erich Jan Zürcher, İstanbul 1995, p. 179), this is the revolutionary meeting of Tashnak organization, since the expression "Daşnaksutyun" is referred to in the meeting minutes.)

<sup>10</sup> BOA DH SYS 109/2-3 (Such decisions are very frequently observed in revolutionary organizations and the process of execution was initiated by pressing a black cross on the name in the Armenian terror organizations.)

<sup>11</sup> Ermeni Komitelerinin Amal ve Hareketi İhtilaliyesi, (The Works and the Revolutionary Activities of the Armenian Committees) Ankara 1983, p. 250; While the Armenians were carrying out their activities in Anatolia on one hand, they were murdering coreligionist Armenians in İstanbul who did not respect them. Lawyer Haçik, Gedikpaşa church archpriest Dacad Vartabet, merchant Karagözyan, candle-maker Önnik, Apik Uncuyan, police officer Markar, Clerical Board member Mampre Vartabet and Hacı Dikran Mıgırdic Tütüncüyan are only some of the Armenians murdered by the Armenian brigands. Altan Deliorman, *Türklere Karşı Ermeni Komiteleri*, (The Armenian Militants against Turks) (İstanbul: 1975), p. 31.

### Ottoman Attempts to Prevent Separatism

As a result of the developments in the Ottoman territory towards the end of the 19th century, it became to be apparent that peace would be interrupted and disturbances would occur. A short time before the declaration of the Second Ottoman Constitution, Van governor Ali Rıza Pasha, who was trying to prevent the separatist activities of the revolutionary Tashnak Armenians without causing harm to the people, appointed an Armenian called Ohannes Ferit Boyacıyan<sup>12</sup> as the deputy governor and his brother Armarak Boyacıyan as the governor of Gevaş district,<sup>13</sup> more to diminish the influence of the Armenian revolutionary committees on the local Armenian people. Gevaş is at about thirty five kilometers away from Van and Akdamar island, which is an important religious center for the Armenians. After these appointments, the Tashnak Armenian committee, which made separatist propaganda among the Armenians and frequently complained to the European states, would not have any reason to complain. Armarak Boyacıyan, while strictly preventing the Armenian brigands from using Akdamar island as a base and hindering their operations, was almost eliminating their influence on the local people. Thus, the policy of Ali Rıza Pasha started to give results.<sup>14</sup> But the Armenian gangs by killing Armarak Boyacıyan, removed an important obstacle before them.<sup>15</sup> Upon the murder of his brother, Ohannes Ferid, Boyacıyan stated that he could not stay in Van any more and with the authorisation of Ali Pasha, he requested to be assigned to the post of the deputy governor of Elazığ, a city far away from Van.<sup>16</sup>

Aware of the sensitivity of the situation, Ali Pasha drew attention of the Sublime Port (Ottoman Government) and requested that an Armenian called Mikail to be appointed as the deputy governor of Van, in order to increase the loyalty of the local people to the government and upset the expectations of the Armenian

<sup>12</sup> Y. Çark, op cit., p. 168.

<sup>13</sup> Faiz Demiroğlu, *Van'da Ermeni Mezalimi*, (Armenian Atrocities in Van) (Ankara: 1995), p. 54; *Teotik Salnamesi*, Istanbul 1911, p. 250; Y. Çark, op. cit., p. 168.

<sup>14</sup> As a result of these attempts of Ali Pasha, the social order tried to be upset in Van started to return to good old days. However, the gangs murdered Ali Pasha, who prevented their activities, in Batum after succeeding in their struggle to draw him away. Hasan Oktay, "Valiler Eskiden de Hedefi", (Governors were Targeted Before) *Tarih ve Medeniyet*, (History and Civilization) (Istanbul: 1999), volume 62, pp. 60-63.

<sup>15</sup> BOA *İrade-i Dahiliyye*, 2685/55, 27/Şevval/1325.

<sup>16</sup> BOA *İrade-i Dahiliyye*, 2685/55, 27/Şevval/1325.

**Some favors were granted to the Armenian notables living in the Ottoman territory.**

extremists.<sup>17</sup> The Sublime Port and appointed Mikail as the deputy governor of Van. However, Mikail requested to be excused from this post as he knew that he could not serve his term in office as it should be because he was disturbed by the attitude of Tashnak Armenians in Van. Then, former district governor Leon was assigned to this post as a gesture to please the Armenians in Van.<sup>18</sup> Besides some favors were granted to the Armenian notables living in the Ottoman territory.<sup>19</sup> By acting in this way, it was thought by the government that the extremist Armenians would lose their ground for separatist propaganda. Despite all these attempts of goodwill, Armenian revolutionary committees strengthened their relations with Russian Armenians, carried out underground activities.

**Mayor Kapamacıyan Murdered**

According to Aram Manukyan, the leader of the Tashnak committee, the Mayor of Van, Bedros Kapamacıyan, should have been punished for standing against Armenian revolutionary committees. Kapamacıyan, who was frequently threatened, left his house one evening together with some family members to participate as a guest in the name giving ceremony of Marcidciyan, one of his relatives. Then, a Tashnak group positioned around his house, started shooting them. The Mayor, who was caught without any protection, fell dead with two bullets that hit his head on 10 December 1912.<sup>20</sup>

As the Mayor Kapamacıyan's house was at Bağlar district, the closest police station was at a distance of ten minutes.<sup>21</sup> Therefore, the murderers managed to escape easily in the dark before the gendarmes arrived where the assassination took place. Bağlar district was a beautiful place with gardens where the

<sup>17</sup> BOA İrade-i Dahiliyye, 1596/35, 16/Recep/1326.

<sup>18</sup> BOA İrade-i Dahiliyye, 2118/72, 22/Şaban/1326.

<sup>19</sup> BOA İrade Taltifat, it is seen that favors were granted to hundreds of Armenians and one of them was Kapamacıyan. BOA İrade Taltifat, 1325. Za/1

<sup>20</sup> BOA DH SYS 109/2-2.

<sup>21</sup> Anahide Ter Minassian, "Ermeni Kaynaklarına Göre Yüzyıl Başında Van", *Modernleşme Sürecinde Osmanlı Kentleri*, (The Ottoman Towns in the Process of Modernization) (Istanbul: 1999), p. 118.

Armenians formed the majority of the residents. Since the Tashnak committee was very strong in Bağlar. It was easy for the assassins to escape and hide.<sup>22</sup> Police chief transferred more of policemen and gendarmes to Bağlar and carried out an extensive examination and collected all evidences at the place where the incident occurred.<sup>23</sup> Any tiny fault of the authorities could have led to a great disorder in Van, which was the scene of serious Armenian rebellion in the past.<sup>24</sup>

### Assassins Arrested

When the situation calmed down, the testimonies of the eye witnesses were started to be taken and information on the murderers collected. Particularly from the testimony of Mayor's son,<sup>25</sup> it was revealed that an Armenian terrorist called Karakin and a friend of him were main suspects. The identification of murderers prevented a possible disorder between the Muslim people and the Armenians.<sup>26</sup> Rapid operations were carried out, Karakin was arrested but his unidentified partner succeeded to escape.<sup>27</sup> Coachman Potur, who was sought by the police for

<sup>22</sup> Anahide Ter Minassian, op. cit, p. 118; Bağlar was an area of 7 km length and 3 km width with yards and gardens. The houses were surrounded by thick and high walls and secret passages were easily made between houses and gardens through irrigation canals left from Urartus, connecting the houses. This region was later used as a fortress during Van rebellion and formed the point of resistance. See M. Kalman, *Batı-Ermenistan (Kürt İlişkileri) ve Jenosid*, İstanbul 1994, p. 116; *La Defense Heroique de Van (Anonyme)*, Geneva 1916; Yves Ternos, age, p. 268. For those told by Venezuela citizen Nogales Mendez assigned in the Turkish forces during the Armenian rebellion in Van, see; Kaymakam Hakkı, *Hilal Altında Dört Yıl ve Buna Ait Bir Cevap*, (Four Years under the Crescent) İstanbul 1931; Mehmet Necati Kutlu, *Türkiye'de Bir Gezgin Şövalye (A Traveller in Turkey)* Nogales Mendez, (İstanbul: 2000).

<sup>23</sup> BOA DH SYS 109/2-2.

<sup>24</sup> Ergünöz Akçora, *Van ve Çevresinde Ermeni İsyanları*, (The Armenian Rebellions in and around Van) 1986-1916, (İstanbul: 1994).

<sup>25</sup> The son of the mayor was also sympathizing the Tashnak committee. Therefore, it is very likely that he knew the persons sent by the committee, and furthermore, despite all the secret operation of the committee, the son informed against the committee by deciphering this assassination committed against his father. It was even told by persons who were at young ages at the time of the incident in interviews made years later with them that the mayor was killed by his son; however, this is only the result of interference of myths when the event was told throughout years by the people who were deeply affected by the terror of the event. The truth is as told above. "They did not let the Armenians who did not serve them live. For example, there was an Armenian mayor here. His name was, if I am not mistaken, Kafanacıyan, and they had him killed by his son as he did not support them." Ergünöz Akçora, "Yaşayanların Diliyle Van ve Çevresinde Ermeni Mezalimi", (Armenian atrocities in and around Van on the Eye Witness accounts) *Yakın Tarihimizde Van Uluslararası Sempozyumu*, (Van in Recent History-International Symposium) Van 1990, p. 151. "They made the mayor's son drink, sent him to his father and made him kill his father", Hüseyin Çelik, *Görenlerin Gözüyle Van'da Ermeni Mezalimi*, (The Armenian Atrocities in Van) Van 1996, p. 70.

<sup>26</sup> BOA DH SYS 109/2-2.

<sup>27</sup> BOA DH SYS 109/2-3.

smuggling arms to Van, was involved in the incident with his coach and the persons called Saddler Osep, jeweler Karakin and Shaf, were all arrested following intense pursuits.<sup>28</sup> Shaf was the one who took orders for the assassination directly from Aram Manukyan, the mastermind of the crime.

Karakin's partner, who disappeared after the incident, was later arrested and imprisoned. The police was quite quick in identifying and arresting the perpetrators of the assassination, something unusual in Van, because Kapamacıyan was an important figure and intercomunal relations were so sensitive.

It was decided that Viramyan, one of the columnists of the Armenian Azadamart newspaper published by the members of Tashak committee, Aram Manukyan,<sup>29</sup> the inspector of Armenian schools and representative of the Tashnak committee in Van and some of the leading Tashnak committee members should be arrested as instigators of the murder of Mayor Kapamacıyan.<sup>30</sup>

Since the leading members of the Tashnak committee used to complain about the Governorship to Istanbul and European embassies on every occasion, they thought that this arrest warrant issued about them was related with this complains. They were holding frequent meetings for this in the Tashnak committee club and assessing the situation. They thought that they were untouchable, since they were influential in Van and the government would not have taken the risk of a communal revolt. Therefore, while becoming dominant over the people, committee members gained more self-confidence. For these reasons, the arrests of Manukian and Viramyan, who organized and directed the murder of Mayor, were postponed to a more convenient time.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>28</sup> BOA DH SYS 109/2-11.

<sup>29</sup> Aram Manukyan perpetrated a series of acts in Van as the head of Van Revolutionary Armenian committee. He was arrested with the offense of encouraging the murder of Van governor Ali Pasha, who was murdered in Batum by Alev Başıyan, but he was considered to be a political convict and released upon the declaration of the Second Constitution just when he would be executed. During the occupation of Van by the Russians during World War I, he murdered many Van residents while leading Armenian rebels and he was later assigned as Russia's governor in Van. *Ermeni Komitelerinin Amal ve Hareketi İhtilaliyesi*, (The Works and the Revolutionary Activities of the Armenian Committees) Ankara 1983. Aram Manukyan retreated together with the Russians after Van was regained by Turks, he was assigned in the foundation of present Armenian republic and served as the minister of the interior in this republic until his death in 1919. Yves Ternon, op. cit. , p. 274.

<sup>30</sup> BOA DH SYS 109/2-15, 16.

<sup>31</sup> BOA DH SYS 109/2-15. The fact that Cabir Pasha, Commander of Van Eleventh Army Corps, sent a telegram to Istanbul stating that there was no good in arresting the said persons at that time and waited for a suitable time encouraged the members of Armenian revolutionary Tashnaks developing in Van and excited the incident.

**Both Armenians and Muslims frequently asked the governorship about the investigation on the murder of Kapamacıyan.**

The people could have become daunted as no measures were taken about the committee that was behind the assassination, although one or two persons who committed the murder were arrested.

**Viramyán and His Defense**

Both Armenians and Muslims frequently asked the governorship about the investigation on the murder of Kapamacıyan, the case file was transferred to Istanbul.<sup>32</sup> Viramyán Papazyan, who lost the elections in 1912 and started to write in Azadamart newspaper, received an arrest warrant as the suspects gave his name to the police in relation with the assassination. Viram Papazyan sent the petition below to the Ministry of Interior:

"To the Ministry of Interior

Upon my arrival at Van after three months of absence, I have seen our province and Hizan town of Bitlis in a state of great crisis. While there is no serious attempt to correct many unjust conducts, full liberty is given to the murderers and bandits and the farmers are disturbed by the arrival of spring. Because they have no doubt that murders, injuries and plunders will follow. Van Governor İzzet Pasha disregards the arming and preparation for war of Kurdish peasants by Kurdish chiefs, who are known as bandits and murderers, and carries out a slow and continuous prosecution against the notable members of the Armenian community and the Tashnak committee. Innocent peasants and Kolost of Karkan, Sahak of Mindan, Şirin of Karagündüz and some Armenians are imprisoned. Many of these flee because of fear. Kapamacıyan was killed on 10th December; my departure from Van was 19 days before that. Despite this fact, I received a warrant from the public prosecutor as a suspect in this incident and I learned that a warrant was sent to Aram, the colleague of Rafael, itinerant director of Akdamar Katholikos school, also as a suspect in the same incident. As I knew the purposes of Mr. İzzet and his consultants and that law officers enjoyed keeping people in prison, I did not surrender to them. Although I am not unable

<sup>32</sup> BOA DH SYS 109/2-15, 16.

against such vicious slanders, I hereby state that I do not want to be the victim of their desires. If Mr. Izzet and his men continue such acts against Armenians, it is certain that those who are honest and who fear will flee, since murderers, usurpers and thieves will become dominant.

Requesting from the state to pay attention to these problems threatening our province, where the interests of Armenian nation confirm their inseparable loyalty to the Ottoman land, and to take serious measures while there is still time, I am waiting for your reply with the hope that the fault made in Rumelia will not be repeated in Anatolia.

Former Van Deputy Viramyán.<sup>33</sup>

This petition of Viremyán, which appears innocent at first sight, was taken into consideration by the Ministry of Interior. In the ciphered message sent to Van province by the general intelligence office of the Ministry of Interior, it was informed that Viramyán left Van before the murder and complained from the hostile conducts against Armenians living in Van, and it was requested that these incidents be clarified and finalized. Besides, it was recommended that considering the sensitivity of the situation to avoid violent acts that would cause anxiety among Armenians.<sup>34</sup>

As a leading member of the Tashnak committee, one cannot totally suggest that Viramyán definitely did not take part in the assassination.<sup>35</sup> The petition he wrote appears as a completely professional petition written for the sake of history.<sup>36</sup> In fact, the Balkan incidents that he referred in this letter can be interpreted as a covert threatening. Viramyán's failure in the 1912 elections as deputy could be considered as a reason lying beneath the murder of Kapamacıyan.

### Funeral

The rapid arrest of the persons who took part in the assassination of Kapamacıyan, despite not duly penalized, pleased

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<sup>33</sup> BOA DH SYS 109/2-12-13-14.

<sup>34</sup> BOA DH SYS 109/2-10/1.

<sup>35</sup> *Belgelerle Ermeni Sorunu*, (Armenian Question in the Documents) Genelkurmay ATASE yayını, (Ankara: 1992), s. 125.

<sup>36</sup> About the presentation of information so as to direct the history as they like by a certain ideological sector, see, Tamer Akçam, *Türk Ulusal Kimliği ve Ermeni Sorunu*, (The Armenian Question and Turkish National Identity) (Istanbul: 1994), p. 220.



the local people. However, the fact that the murderers were Armenians also caused a deep sorrow among the local Armenians.<sup>37</sup> Necessary measures were taken to avoid disorder in the funeral of Kapamacıyan.<sup>38</sup> In the speeches delivered during the funeral which started early in the morning with the attendance of a considerable number of people, the kindness and integrity of Kapamacıyan were mentioned. As representing the foreign missions, English, Russian and French consuls were present.<sup>39</sup> On the other hand, it is meaningful that no member of Tashnak committee attended the funeral.<sup>40</sup> Tashnak committee took the opportunity to make it clear that any obstacle before them would be crushed. This was a message to the people who did not share their separatist aims.

The secret police organization working in Van was given the order to observe the behavior, dialogs and attitudes of the people attending the funeral.<sup>41</sup> Furthermore, the secret police was in charge to prevent any provocation that could occur during the funeral. According to the records of the secret police, people told each other at the Armenian cemetery at Bağlar district that it was obvious that the Tashnaks committed the assassination and the government should have acted on this matter more swiftly and they also talked about the services of Kapamacıyan for his

**It was obvious that the Tashnaks committed the assassination.**

country, the Ottoman Empire. On the other hand, the Armenians were expressing their hatred and condemning of the Tashnaks with as low voice, as they were scared of the Tashnak violence. They also told that the committee would soon lose its influence on the Armenians and a great anger would rise among the Armenians.<sup>42</sup> The funeral lasted until the evening and Kapamacıyan was buried in the family cemetery. The minimum conditions of living together, which Kapamacıyan endeavored to maintain perhaps at the price of his life, were rapidly disturbed

<sup>37</sup> Whereas there was public opinion that persons involved in such events could not be duly penalized before, it was common view that those involved in Kapamacıyan incident could not be duly penalized, either. This opinion is true for even officials assigned in Van. *BOA DH SYS 109/2-11*.

<sup>38</sup> *BOA DH SYS 109/2-4*.

<sup>39</sup> *BOA DH SYS 109/2-7-a*

<sup>40</sup> *BOA DH SYS 109/2-6*.

<sup>41</sup> *BOA DH SYS 109/2-8*.

<sup>42</sup> *BOA DH SYS 109/2-7b*.

**The grandchildren of Kirkors, Arabacıyans, Terzibaşıyans, Avadises, Boyacıyans and hundreds of other Armenian families are telling from generation to generation the dream of living together with Muslims in the city of Van**

and his aspiration for cohabitation in Van was irreversibly upset.

The revolutionary Tashnak Armenians could murder their own fellow people without hesitation in order to achieve their ambitions. The systematized attempts of the committee members, who ventured all acts for establishing a suitable conditions for revolution, gave

their yields with the help of the Russians and they temporarily occupied Van in 1915,<sup>43</sup> and when the Russians retreated in October 1917 upon the Bolshevik Revolution, Van was regained by the Turks. When the Muslim people, who left their city with much difficulties as a result of incredible atrocities and pressure of the Armenian Tashnak gang, returned there, they found the city completely ruined. Their Armenian neighbors and friends were no more living in Van. The grandchildren of Kirkors, Arabacıyans, Terzibaşıyans, Avadises, Boyacıyans and hundreds of other Armenian families that cannot be named here are telling from generation to generation the dream of living together with Muslims in the city of Van what they listened from their parents.

<sup>43</sup> For the torment, torture and cruelty applied on the Muslim people in Van by Tashnak and Hınçak armenians, see, *Arşiv Belgelerine Göre Kafkaslar'da ve Anadolu'da Ermeni Mezalimi, I-IV*, (The Armenian Atrocities in the Caucasus and Anatolia According to Archive Documents) Ankara 1995; Faiz Demiroğlu, *Van'da Ermeni Mezalimi*, (The Armenian Atrocities in Van) (Ankara: 1995); Ergünöz Akçora, *Van ve Çevresinde Ermeni İsyanları*, (Armenian Rebellions in and around Van) 1896-1916, (Istanbul: 1994); Ergünöz Akçora, op. cit.; Hüseyin Çelik, op. cit.; Kaymakam Hakkı, op. cit.; for the narration of Van incidents through Armenian perspective, see, M. Kalman, *Batı-Ermenistan* (Kürt İlişkileri) ve Jenosid, (Istanbul: 1994), p. 116; *La Defense Heroique de Van (Anonyme)*, Geneva 1916; Yves Ternos, *Ermeni Tabusu*, (The Armenian Taboo) (Istanbul: 1993); Tamer Akçam, op. cit.

# ARMENIA'S FOREIGN POLICY: BASIC PARAMETERS OF THE TER-PETROSIAN AND KOCHARIAN ERA

Assist. Prof. Dr. Kamer KASIM\*

## 1. Introduction

Armenia became independent in 1991 after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Unlike some other former Soviet Republics, in Armenia there was a movement, which was eager for independence and struggled for it during the process to lead the independent Republic of Armenia.

On 31<sup>st</sup> of January 1991, Armenia's Supreme Soviet voted to boycott all actions taken by Moscow. As a result Armenia boycotted the Union referendum, which took place on 17<sup>th</sup> of March 1991.<sup>1</sup> Armenia showed her will for independence even earlier. The Armenian Pan-National Movement (ANM), whose roots back to the Karabakh Committee, played a crucial role in the independence process. Levon Ter-Petrosian, who was one of the leaders of the Karabakh Committee and the ANM, became the first President of the Republic of Armenia.

Armenia's foreign policy was dominated by the developments of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and its impacts. Besides the conflict, Armenia's relations with its neighbours and Russia, the successor of the Soviet Union, was Armenian administrations' priority in conducting Armenian foreign policy.

In this article, the basic parameters of Armenian foreign policy will be analysed in the periods of Armenia's two presidents. In this context differences and similarities of Ter-Petrosian's and Kocharian's foreign policy and Armenia's strategic priorities will be discussed.

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<sup>1</sup> Michael P. Croissant, *The Armenia-Azerbaijan Conflict Causes And Implications*, (London: Praeger, 1998), p. 40. In contrast to Armenia 92 % voted yes for the new Union Treaty in Azerbaijan.

## 2. Armenia's Foreign Policy In The Ter-Petrosian Era

Levon Ter-Petrosian was elected as the first President of Armenia on 16<sup>th</sup> of October 1991. He graduated from the Oriental Studies Department of Yerevan State University in 1968. He completed his postgraduate studies at the Leningrad Oriental Studies Institute. Ter-Petrosian became well known in Armenian politics with his leadership of the Karabakh Committee, which aimed to put Nagorno-Karabakh under the jurisdiction of Armenia. He was arrested together with other members of the Committee on 10<sup>th</sup> of December 1988. In 1989, he was elected as a member of the Board of the ANM and then he became the Chairman of the Board.<sup>2</sup> When Ter-Petrosian became the President of the Republic of Armenia, the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict was the major issue in Armenian foreign policy. Before discussing Armenia's Karabakh policy under his presidency, factors, which affected Armenia's foreign policy orientation and decision making process will be discussed.

Being a land lock state and the lack of natural resources Armenia cannot be considered as one of the strategically important regional states. Armenia's economic progress and political stability depended on its ability to establish good relations with its neighbours and to manage to get economic aid from outside. However, the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and Armenia's policy towards it affected Armenia's relations with its neighbours and also the regional stability. Russia played an important role in Armenia's foreign policy. As it will be discussed below, although both Ter-Petrosian and Kocharian tried to reduce Armenia's dependency on Russia, they were not successful and Armenia became Russia's client state. Relations with the US were also important for Armenia, particularly for its economy, since Armenia became the second largest recipient of the US aid on per-capita basis after Israel.<sup>3</sup>

**Although both Ter-Petrosian and Kocharian tried to reduce Armenia's dependency on Russia, they were not successful and Armenia became Russia's client state.**

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.president.am/eng/folder>

<sup>3</sup> Between 1992-1996 Armenia received 350 million US Dollars aid from the USA. Svante O. Cornell, 'Undeclared War', *Journal of South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 20, No. 4, Fall, 1997, p. 7

**The Armenian diaspora and the diaspora parties are forces, which try to influence Armenian foreign policy and they were in conflict with Ter-Petrosian during his presidency.**

Armenia has presidential system and the President appoints and dismisses the Prime Minister and the President can also dissolve the National Assembly and designate special elections consulting with the National Assembly's President and Prime Minister.<sup>4</sup> Thus, it can be argued that Armenia has a very strong presidential system. Also in terms of foreign policy making the President appears to be the most powerful figure and shapes Armenia's foreign policy. However, there are also forces, which influence Armenia's foreign policy making process and they might restrict the President's movement regarding foreign policy matters. The Armenian diaspora and the diaspora parties are forces, which try to influence Armenian foreign policy and they were in conflict with Ter-Petrosian during his presidency. Besides organized diaspora groups, individual diaspora members played an important role in Armenia's foreign policy. Particularly at the beginning of the independence of Armenia, there was severe shortage of skilled foreign policy personnel and specialist. In that atmosphere diaspora Armenians took part in the foreign policy making process. For example, Gerard Libaridian, who was born in Beirut and is a US citizen, was a senior presidential adviser to Ter-Petrosian and he has been a key architect of Armenian foreign policy and played an important role during the negotiations for the solution of the Nagorno-Karabakh problem. Rafii Hovanissian, who was the first Foreign Minister of the Republic of Armenia and the present Foreign Minister Vartan Oskanian are also diaspora members.<sup>5</sup>

### **2.1. Foreign Policy of the ANM And Ter-Petrosian**

Ter-Petrosian was aware of the fact that land-locked Armenia needed to establish good relations with its neighbours for economic recovery and political stability. He described the aim of

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<sup>4</sup> Stephan H. Astourian, "From Ter-Petrosian To Kocharian: Leadership Change In Armenia", *Berkeley Program in Soviet and Post-Soviet Studies Working Paper Series*, 2000-2001, p. 3.

<sup>5</sup> Hratch Tchilingirian, "Armenia's Foreign Relations", *Armenian News Network/Groong*, <http://groong.usc.edu/ro/ro-1997>

**Ter-Petrosian argued against putting genocide claims in the document of "Declaration of Independence of Armenia".**

his policy as normalization of Armenia's foreign policy. To reach this aim Armenia had to establish normal diplomatic relations with Turkey and Armenia also had to reach a certain understanding with Azerbaijan. Normalization of Armenia's relations with Turkey required to call off the genocide claims and to find a peaceful solution to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. For the former, the ANM and Ter-Petrosian showed signs of taking steps. Ter-Petrosian argued against putting genocide claims in the document of "Declaration of Independence of Armenia". However, majority of deputies voted in favour of the paragraph, which stated that *"Republic of Armenia would support efforts to achieve international recognition of the Armenian Genocide"*.<sup>6</sup> Ter-Petrosian and the ANM came under heavy attack from the diaspora parties, the Armenian Revolutionary Front (Dashnaks-ARF) and the Armenian Democratic Liberal Party (ADP-ADL). Besides these diaspora parties the Armenian Communist Party (ACP) also criticised Ter-Petrosian. These parties had also territorial ambitions and they inclined not to recognize territorial integrity of Armenia's neighbours like Turkey. For example a leader of the ADL stated that

*"We have always maintained that the territory of this Republic of Armenia is the nucleus of tomorrow's Greater Armenia. In this respect, we expect the newly formed government to commit itself to the restoration of our historic rights. More specifically, the new Republic must include in its on-going agenda the recognition of the Armenian genocide and our historic territorial claims by the international community."*<sup>7</sup>

Ter-Petrosian and the ANM had to confront with the strong opposition to implement their foreign policy, particularly regarding Armenian's relations with Turkey and Armenia's policy towards the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Ter-Petrosian aimed to normalize

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<sup>6</sup> Stephan H. Astourian, "From Ter-Petrosyan To Kocharian: Leadership Change In Armenia", *Berkeley Program in Soviet and Post-Soviet Studies Working Paper Series*, 2000-2001, p. 20.

<sup>7</sup> Edmond Y. Azadian, "Address to the Parliament of Armenia: On Independence and the Future of the Republic", in Edmond Y. Azadian and Agop J. Hacikyan (eds.), *History On The Move: Views, Interviews and Essays On Armenian Issues*, Wayne State University Press, 2000, p. 6

**Although Ter-Petrosian expressed his will for normalization of Armenia's relations with Turkey, Armenia's policy towards the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict prevented any improvement in the relations between the two states.**

Armenia's relations with Turkey. Ter-Petrosian argued that Turkey did not pose any threat to Armenia and normalization of Armenia's relations with Turkey is beneficial for Armenia.<sup>8</sup> Ter-Petrosian's senior adviser Gerard Libaridian also argued that

*"... what if having normal diplomatic and economic relations with Turkey is in the interest of Armenia as well as*

*of Karabakh? Would not improved Armeno-Turkish relations weaken the Azerbaijani negotiating position, the rigidity of which is based on a policy of struggling the Armenian economy? Should the answer to these questions be positive... then the normalization of relations with Turkey would facilitate Armenia's role as a transit route of Caspian Sea hydrocarbon resources."<sup>9</sup>*

Although Ter-Petrosian expressed his will for normalization of Armenia's relations with Turkey, Armenia's policy towards the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict prevented any improvement in the relations between the two states. The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict started in 1988 before the independence of Armenia. When Armenia became independent in 1991, the Nagorno-Karabakh administration also declared "Nagorno-Karabakh Republic". Armenia's foreign policy was based on giving the impression that Armenia was not a part of the conflict and the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict was the internal affairs of Azerbaijan. Armenia did not recognize the "Nagorno-Karabakh Republic". Ter-Petrosian stated that:

*"We want to make every effort to ensure that the problem of Nagorno-Karabakh is not regarded as a conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan. It is wrong to say that Armenia has territorial claims on Azerbaijan. But if we officially recognize the*

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<sup>8</sup> Shireen T. Hunter, *The Transcaucasus in Transition: Nation Building and Conflict*, Washington D.C. : Center For Strategic and International Studies, 1994, p. 30.

<sup>9</sup> Gerard J. Libaridian, *The Challenge of Statehood. Armenian Political Thinking Since Independence*, (Blue Crane Books, Watertown:1999), p. 116.

**Armenian foreign policy during Ter-Petrosian era was heavily criticized by the diaspora parties and Armenian diaspora.**

*'Republic of Nagorno-Karabakh', we could be accused of interference or even provocation.'*<sup>10</sup>

Despite Ter-Petrosian's effort to give the impression that Armenia had nothing to do with the conflict, it would not have been possible for Karabakh Armenians to occupy the territory of Azerbaijan without the support of Armenia. Especially after the Khocali massacre where 1000 Azerbaijani were killed, the government of Armenia was concerned about the possible international criticism and tried to hide its active support for Karabakh Armenians in the conflict. However, international observers indicated that Armenian military forces did take part in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.<sup>11</sup> Besides, the government of Armenia did not denounce her decision to consider Nagorno-Karabakh as a part of Armenia and Ter-Petrosian appointed Serge Sargisian as a Defence Minister in August 1993. Serge Sarkisian was a member of parliament in Armenia and Karabakh.<sup>12</sup>

Armenian forces' occupation of the territory of Azerbaijan made it impossible to normalize Turkey's relations with Armenia. Ter-Petrosian's aim to improve relations with Turkey contradicted his foreign policy towards the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. With his policy towards the conflict, Ter-Petrosian could not satisfy the diaspora and diaspora based parties either. Armenian foreign policy during Ter-Petrosian era was heavily criticized by the diaspora parties and Armenian diaspora. Diaspora involved the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict through its efforts in the US. Armenian diaspora in the US played an important role in the US Congress' decision of Freedom Support Act section 907, prevented the US government from sending humanitarian assistance to Azerbaijan.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Michael P. Croissant, *The Armenia-Azerbaijan Conflict Causes And Implications*, London: Preager, 1998, p. 70.

<sup>11</sup> *Azerbaijan: Seven Years of War* (Human Rights Watch/Helsinki, New York, 1994), 67-73

<sup>12</sup> Joseph R. Masih and Robert O. Krikorian (eds.), *Armenia at the Crossroads*, (Harwood Academic Publishers, 1999) p. 49.

<sup>13</sup> See Kamer Kasım, "The Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict, Caspian Oil and Regional Powers", in Bülent Gökay (ed.), *The Politics of Caspian Oil*, (London: Palgrave, 2001), pp. 194-195. Kamer Kasım, "The Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict From Its Inception To The Peace Process", *Armenian Studies*, June-July-August 2001, pp. 183-184.



**Besides diaspora arranged protest demonstrations against Ter-Petrosian in front of the Armenian embassies in some countries.**

Conflict between Ter-Petrosian and diaspora based parties, particularly the ARF, reached a new stage when Ter-Petrosian administration banned the ARF to operate in Armenia on 28th of December 1994.<sup>14</sup> After that all Dashnak organizations around the world started a campaign against the Ter-Petrosyan administration. The ARF could not participate in the 1995 elections. After the Presidential elections of 22nd of September 1996, Ter-Petrosian was re-elected as President of Armenia. Diaspora campaigned that the election was rigged by Ter-Petrosyan. This allegation affected Ter-Petrosian's image in the US. Besides diaspora arranged protest demonstrations against Ter-Petrosian in front of the Armenian embassies in some countries.<sup>15</sup>

This criticism substantially increased in 1996 when the peace process in the Nagorno-Karabakh problem entered a new stage. Peace process was conducted under the auspices of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group. At the OSCE Lisbon Summit in December 1996 a set of principles was accepted which recognized the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan. Following the Lisbon Summit, Minsk Group co-chairmen initiated a peace proposal, which called the withdrawal of all occupying Armenian armed forces from Nagorno-Karabakh and surrounding areas of Azerbaijan, and the return of all refugees to their homes.<sup>16</sup> Lisbon Summit was considered as a failure of Ter-Petrosian's foreign policy by the Armenian opposition. In 1997 OSCE Minsk Group made a new peace proposal, which was identified as 'step by step' solution for the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. According to this proposal, Armenian forces first would withdraw some of the territories that they occupied outside the Nagorno-Karabakh region and then the process would enter the new phase. Ter-Petrosian gave the impression that he might agree

<sup>14</sup> See, Richard Giragosian, *Transcaucasus: A Chronology*, Washington: Armenian National Committee of America, 1992-1997.

<sup>15</sup> Joseph R. Masih and Robert O. Krikorian (eds.), *Armenia at the Crossroads*, Harwood Academic Publishers, 1999, p.112-114.

<sup>16</sup> Paul Goble, "Caucasus: Analysis from Washington - Armenian-Azerbaijani Conflict Risks Recognition" *RFE/RL*, 8 May 1998.

to the OSCE's proposal.<sup>17</sup> After that diaspora based parties put pressure on Ter-Petrosian and he resigned in 1998.<sup>18</sup>

The normalization of Armenia's relations with Turkey was one of the aims of Armenian foreign policy during the Ter-Petrosian era. However, Armenia's foreign policy towards the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict was a major obstacle for the normalization of relations between Armenia and Turkey. Even during the peace process Armenia did not take necessary steps for the solution of the Nagorno-Karabakh problem. Armenian foreign policy makers faced difficulty to explain Armenia's Karabakh policy to the international community. While Armenia was supporting Karabakh Armenians during the conflict, the government of Armenia considered the conflict as an internal matter of Azerbaijan. Armenia's support and strong linkages with the Nagorno-Karabakh administration were obvious. Controversially, while Ter-Petrosian's Karabakh policy prevented normalization of Turkey's relations with Armenia, his same policy also attracted heavy criticism from diaspora and the diaspora based political parties, which were the main obstacle for the normalization of Armenia's relations with Turkey.

Ter-Petrosian was also not successful regarding the aim of reducing Armenian dependency on Russia. At the beginning of his presidency, for this objective Ter-Petrosian wanted to diversify Armenia's foreign relations and to establish good relations with the other regional states including Turkey. In fact the ANM's ideology was also against the dependency on Russia.<sup>19</sup> However, instability in the region, which was created mainly by the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict increased Armenia's caution regarding its security and Armenia became even more depended on Russia in each passing year of the conflict. Armenia became a state where Russia could keep its military bases without any problem. With the agreement signed between Russia and Armenia on 30th of September 1992, Russian soldiers were deployed in Armenia's border with Turkey.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> 'Armenia Agrees In Principle to Karabakh Peace Plan', *RFE/RL Newswire* 1, 8 October 1997. 'Ter-Petrosyan Holds Press Conference', *Asbarez*, 4 October 1997.

<sup>18</sup> See Kamer Kasım, "Diasporanın Ermenistan Dış Politikasına Etkisi" (Diaspora's Effect on Armenia's Foreign Policy), *2023 Dergisi*, 15 Nisan 2002, pp. 42-46.

<sup>19</sup> Stephan H. Astourian, "From Ter-Petrosyan To Kocharian: Leadership Change In Armenia", *Berkeley Program in Soviet and Post-Soviet Studies Working Paper Series*, 2000-2001, pp. 17-18.

<sup>20</sup> Rouben Adalian and Joseph Masih, (ed.), *Armenia and Karabagh Factbook*, Washington D.C.: Armenian Assembly of America, July 1996, p. 19-20.

Armenia's relations with Iran also played an important role in Armenian foreign policy. During the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, economic relations between Armenia and Iran were important for Armenia's economy. The main concern for Iran was the refugee problem, since during the climax of the conflict Azerbaijani refugees flooded to Iran from the territories, which was occupied by the Armenian forces. Like the other regional powers, Iran also tried to be a mediator in the conflict, though it was not successful. On 8th of May 1992, Rafsanjani, Ter-Petrosian and acting Azerbaijani President Yakup Mamedov came together and later an agreement was signed in Tehran according to which cease-fire would come into effect within one week. However, the Armenian occupation of Shusha ended the Iranian mediation and Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister stated that Nagorno-Karabakh is a part of Azerbaijan and Iran opposed to any change of borders.<sup>21</sup>

Political analyst Rasim Musabeyov blamed Russia for the failure of the Iranian mediation. He stated that

*"In 1992, while Iranian Foreign Minister Velayati was visiting Karabakh, a Russian motorized regiment, together with Armenian forces, committed the Khodjali massacre. Weeks later, on the very day Ter-Petrosyan and Mamedov signed a joint communiqué (on the need to restore stability in the region) in Tehran, Armenia seized Shusha with the help of Russia. This shows that Russia was not at all interested in letting Iran seriously mediate (in the peace talks) and strengthen its influence in the region."*<sup>22</sup>

Iran generally followed pragmatic policies towards Armenia. Although Iran supported Azerbaijan's territorial integrity, its economic relations with Armenia improved and Iran continued to be an important state for Armenia even after the cease-fire in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

### **3. Armenia's Foreign Policy In the Kocharian Era**

After the Presidential elections took place in April 1998, Robert Kocharian became the President of the Republic of Armenia. He was the former "Prime Minister" of the "Nagorno-Karabakh

<sup>21</sup> Gareth M. Winrow, "Azerbaijan And Iran", Alvin Z. Rubinstein and Oles M. Smolansky (eds), *Regional Power Rivalries In The Eurasia, Russia, Turkey, And Iran*, pp. 98-99.

<sup>22</sup> Jean-Christophe Peuch, "Caucasus: Iran Offers To Mediate In Nagorno-Karabakh Dispute", *RFE/RL*, 25 July 2001.

**Radical elements in Armenian politics tried to prevent any compromise, which would be beneficial for Armenia and for the regional stability as well.**

Republic".<sup>23</sup> He was also known to be very close to the Dashnaks. For this reason, when he became President, Kocharian gave the impression that Armenia would follow different foreign policy in terms of the peace process in the Nagorno-Karabakh problem and relations with Turkey. In fact, in the first year of his presidency, Kocharian did not want to come together with Haydar Aliyev, the President of Azerbaijan to discuss the Nagorno-Karabakh problem and he argued that Aliyev should contact with the Nagorno-Karabakh administration. Kocharian also put genocide claims against Turkey on the agenda. Moreover, Kocharian demanded the reduction of the number of the Turkish officials who worked as inspectors in the military stations in Armenia according to the CFE Treaty (Conventional Forces In Europe).<sup>24</sup> When Kocharyan became President, the ARF also was activated in Armenia.<sup>25</sup>

Contrary to his earlier stance regarding the peace process in the Nagorno-Karabakh problem, Kocharyan later met with Aliyev to discuss solution for the problem.<sup>26</sup> However, Kocharian's close ties with the Nagorno-Karabakh administration and increasing effect of diaspora on the Armenian politics were the main obstacles for the settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh problem and the development of Armenia's relations with Turkey. Even the rumors that Kocharian bargained with Aliyev for the Armenian withdrawal of the territories which were occupied by the Armenian forces during the conflict caused reactions of the Nagorno-Karabakh administration and Yerkrpah, which is a political party established by the persons who fought in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.<sup>27</sup> Radical elements in Armenian politics tried to prevent any compromise, which would be beneficial for Armenia and for the regional stability as well. On 27<sup>th</sup> of April 1999, there was an

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<sup>23</sup> Robert Kocharyan was also a member of the Karabakh Committee and he was appointed as Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia in March 1997.

<sup>24</sup> *BBC-SWB*, 1 June 1998.

<sup>25</sup> Uğur Akıncı, News Analysis, *Turkish Daily News*, 26 November 1998.

<sup>26</sup> Kocharyan and Aliyev came together to discuss the solution for the Nagorno-Karabakh problem 4-5 March 2001 in Paris and 3-7 April 2001 in Florida.

<sup>27</sup> Emil Danielyan, 'Kocharian's Karabakh Strategy Challenged By hard-Line Rivals, RFE/RL, Vol. 4, No. 34, Part 1, 17 February 2000.

**Diaspora parties, particularly the ARF, which was legalized by Kocharyan, started to play an important role.**

attack on the Armenian Parliament, where 8 members of the Parliament including Prime Minister Vazgen Sarkisian and Speaker of the Parliament Karen Demirciyan were killed. This attack had also an effect on Armenian foreign policy.

Despite the fact that Prime Minister Vazgen Sarkisian was against Ter-Petrosian's Karabakh policy, he gave the impression that he was ready for compromise and Vazgen Sarkisian would be the person who might support Kocharian, in case Kocharian was ready for the settlement.<sup>28</sup> However, his assassination ended this possibility and it indicated the fact that violent nature of the Armenian politics pressured Armenian President in order to influence on his foreign policy.

During the Kocharian era the diaspora's impact on Armenia also increased. Diaspora parties, particularly the ARF, which was legalized by Kocharyan, started to play an important role. Diaspora and diaspora parties even interrupted Armenian administrations' opinion about the civilian initiative between the Turks and the Armenians. For example, Turkish-Armenian Reconciliation Commission was established on 9th of July 2001 with 4 Armenian and 6 Turkish members.<sup>29</sup> The Armenian Foreign Ministry welcomed the establishment of the Commission. However, the ARF and Dashnaks' organizations in the diaspora were against the Commission, which affected the relations between the Armenian government and the ARF.<sup>30</sup> After diaspora's and Armenian political parties reaction against the Commission, Armenian Foreign Ministry changed its opinion about the Commission and distanced itself from the work of the Commission.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>28</sup> Gerard Libaridian, 'Armenia In The Wake of Assassination', BCSIA Documents, <http://ksgnotes1.harvard.edu/BCSIA/Library.nfs/pubs/ArmeniaTalk>, 8 November 1999

<sup>29</sup> For the details of the Turkish-Armenian Reconciliation Commission See, Kamer Kasım, "Turkish-Armenian Reconciliation Commission: A Missed Opportunity Opportunity", *Armenian Studies*, Issue 4, December 2001-January-February 2002, pp. 256-273. Kamer Kasım, "Türk-Ermeni Barışma Komisyonu: Kısa Süren Bir Diyalog Girişimi" (Turkish-Armenian Reconciliation Commission: A Short-lived Attempt for Dialogue) *Stratejik Analiz*, Vol. 2, No. 22, February 2002, pp. 30-36.

<sup>30</sup> The ARF, which generally supported the government, voted against a bill about privatization of the electricity distribution network. Harut Sassounian, "President Kocharian Must Intervene to Prevent Further Damage by Turkish Commission", *California Courier Online*, 2 August 2001.

<sup>31</sup> "Foreign Ministry Respond Reconciliation Grouping", *Asbarez Online*, <http://www.Asbarez.com> 2 August 2001.

**Kocharian attended the celebration for the 50th year anniversary of the establishment of the NATO.**

Like his predecessor, Ter-Petrosian, Kocharian also tried to reduce Armenia's dependency on Russia. Strong relations with the US might provide the means to lessen the Russian influence on Armenia. Kocharian attended

the celebration for the 50th year anniversary of the establishment of the NATO. The celebrations were held in Washington, during NATO's operation in Kosovo when the relations were tense between Russia and the West.<sup>32</sup> Besides his aim to reduce the Russian influence on Armenia, Kocharian also had a reason from domestic politics in his foreign policy towards the US. The Armenian National Committee of America (ANCA), one of the biggest diaspora organizations in the US, was a strong supporter of Kocharyan and the ANCA tried to establish close ties between the US and Armenia. However, Russia's influence on Armenia continued and even increased with Putin's presidency in Russia. The main reason for this was the Nagorno-Karabakh problem and Russia's new national security doctrine. Armenia needed to normalize its relations with its neighbors in order to reduce Russia's influence. But the Nagorno-Karabakh problem prevented normalization of Armenia's relations with Turkey and Azerbaijan. Occupation of Azerbaijan's territories and situation of ceasefire without a settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh dispute, created also insecurity in Armenia. Armenia's uncompromising stance in the dispute made it even more depended on Russia and Russian military stations on its territory. The idea that Russian support of Armenia in the Nagorno-Karabakh problem is indefinite is made Armenian administration not to consider other alternatives. Russia's new national security concept and Putin's idea to revive Russia's role in the Caucasus was also forced Armenia for close ties with Moscow.<sup>33</sup> Putin's visit to Armenia on 14-15 September 2001 and the agreements signed during the visit indicated the special relations between the two states.<sup>34</sup> Terrorist actions in the

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<sup>32</sup> Harry Tamrazian, 'Armenia Seeks Complementary In S Caucasus', *Asia Times online*, <http://www.atimes.com>, April 2000.

<sup>33</sup> Jyotsna Bakshi, 'Russia's National Security Concepts and Military Doctrines: Continuity and Change', *Strategic Analysis*, Vol. XXIV, No. 7, pp. 1278-1281.

<sup>34</sup> For Putin's visit to Armenia See Vladimir Socor, 'Armenia's Reliance on Russia Increase After Putin's Visit', *Jamestown Foundation Monitor*, Vol. VII, Issue 171, 19 September 2001. Nazmi Gül ve Gökçen Ekici,

US on 11th of September 2001 and its implications on the Caucasus region had also influence on Armenia and particularly Armenia's relations with Russia. After 11th of September, the US influence increased in the Caucasus and the US troops were stationed in Georgia. Moreover, Azerbaijan's relations with the US was also improved due to the Azerbaijan's support of the US's efforts against terrorism. These developments increased Armenia's importance for Russia in the Caucasus. Russia's military stations in Armenia stand as the major indicator of Russia's strategic role in the region.<sup>35</sup>

Armenia's relations with Iran continued to be important in economic terms for Armenia during the Kocharian era.<sup>36</sup> In the Kocharyan era, the main focus in Armenia's relations with Iran was the cooperation in the field of energy and trade. Kocharian's visit to Iran in December 2001 resulted in an agreement on softening the trade regime between the two states. The speeding up of the construction of Kajaran tunnel, which would provide the shortest route for Armenia-Iran gas pipeline, was also discussed during the Kocharyan's visit.<sup>37</sup>

#### 4. Conclusion

Armenia joined the international community as one of the newly independent states in 1991. Since then she became a part of the regional instability in the Caucasus. Both Ter-Petrosian and Kocharian tried to break Armenia's dependency on Russia but they were unsuccessful in their efforts. Ter-Petrosian's foreign policy towards Turkey might be considered realistic in terms of Armenia's capacity and Armenia's need for political and economic stability. However, he was not successful and the reason for this

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"Stratejik Ortaklar Arasında Bir Sorun mu Var? Putin'in Ermenistan Ziyareti ve Moskova-Erivan İlişkileri", (Is There any Problem Between the Strategic Partners Putin's Visit to Armenia and Moscow-Yerivan Relations) *Stratejik Analiz*, Vol. 2, No. 19, November 2001, pp. 32-38.

<sup>35</sup> For the effect of the 11th of September terrorist actions on Russia's Caucasus policy see, Kamer Kasım, "11 Eylül Terör Eylemlerinin Rusya'nın Kafkasya Politikasına Etkisi", (Sept. 11 Terror Attacks's Effect on Russia's Caucasus Policy) *Selçuk Üniversitesi Hukuk Fakültesi Dergisi*, Vol. 9, No. 3-4, 2001, pp. 53-64.

<sup>36</sup> Trade volume between Armenia and Iran was 80 million US Dollars in the first nine mouths of the year 2000. Iranian export to Armenia was 58 million US Dollars and Armenia's export to Iran was 22 million US Dollars. <http://www.azg.am/-RU/20020205/20020020503.shtml>

<sup>37</sup> "New Page In Armenian-Iranian Relation Opens, President Kocharian Says", AZG Armenian Daily, <http://www.azg.am/>, 240, 28 December 2001. Haroutiun Khachatryan, "Iran-Armenia Ties Look Promising, Though Obstacles Remain Steep", Eurasia Insight, <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav022002.shtml>, 20 February 2002.

**While he was accused of being a dictator by the diaspora, Ter-Petrosian might have presented himself as a man of peace.**

was particularly the external factor, which influences the Armenian foreign policy, namely, Armenian diaspora. Another reason for his failure was Ter-Petrosian's lack of courage in terms of finding solution to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. If he took necessary steps for the solution, he might be able to curtail the influence of diaspora with the support from other regional states as well as the US. During the criticism against Ter-Petrosian, which was conducted by diaspora, particularly in the US, Ter-Petrosian's supporters were lack of "weapon" to defend him. While he was accused of being a dictator by the diaspora, Ter-Petrosian might have presented himself as a man of peace. However, he did not take initiative for the peace and he did not have enough courage either.

With Kocharian's election Armenian foreign policy showed the sign of change in terms of Armenian-Turkish relations and the peace process of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Diaspora's support strengthened Kocaryan's hands in domestic politics as well as foreign policy. Despite his early attitude towards Turkey and peace negotiations of the Nagorno-Karabakh problem, later Kocharian softened his line. Kocharian also met with Aliyev to discuss the Nagorno-Karabakh. However, he is supported by radical elements and they put pressure on Kocharian not to compromise in Nagorno-Karabakh and also Armenia's relations with Turkey. It is difficult to expect that Armenia will take necessary steps for regional stability under Kocharyan because of the groups, which support him.

It would be Armenia's economic and political interest to normalize its relations with Turkey and other neighbors and to manage this Armenian administration should be free from the heavy influence of diaspora and other radical elements.



# INTERVIEW

Leyla TAVŞANOĞLU\*

Cumhuriyet daily discussed the Armenian problem with the Director of the Institute for Armenian Research, Ambassador (R) Ömer Lütem\*\*

## **Leyla Tavşanoğlu**

*I believe that one of the major problems that Turkey faces is the so-called Armenian genocide issue which is continuously repeated and brought to table. This deeply upsetting issue was once again broached in the Caucasus Report of the Swedish member of the European Parliament, Per Gahrton. "What does Per Gahrton have to do with the alleged Armenian genocide?" you may ask yourself. The said politician was first a member of the Liberal Party, he later transferred to the Green Party where he was even against the EU membership of Sweden. Gahrton, recently also a writer of detective novels apparently sees the alleged genocide through the eyes of Hercules Poirot. While Western politicians continue to delve in the issue the Ankara based Institute for Armenian Research organized in Istanbul an international symposium on the occasion of the anniversary of the assassination of Talat Pasha. We talked to Ambassador (Rtd.) Ömer Lütem about the aims of this symposium and the alleged genocide which we constantly witness being pushed to the forefront of the agenda.*

**- Although it is widely known that during the First World War all parties were involved in fighting and that Armenian Hinchak and Dashnaks were being used by Russia, why, in your opinion, are these realities disregarded and allegations of a systematic genocide continuously brought up nearly a century later?**

- That is a very good question. The Armenians form a very large diaspora. In my opinion the root of the matter can be explained in the following way: Everyone says that great injustice was done to

\* Cumhuriyet Newspaper 17 March, 2002.

\*\* This is a slightly abridged version of the original interview.

the Armenians in the First World War and they believe that they are now taking revenge. The idea of vengeance may be correct here but as you mentioned, roughly a century has passed over these events. How can there still be talk of revenge after all this time? One may ask "what kind of hatred is this?" In fact there are other reasons behind.

**- What could be these reasons?**

- These reasons are not publicly discussed, nor are they written about openly. Yet if one pays close attention they can be detected between the lines: the Armenians in France are becoming increasingly more French, those in the USA are becoming increasingly more American. These people are losing their Armenian identities after a while. There exist groups which are very disturbed by the Armenians losing their ethnical identity. The first one that comes to mind is the Armenian Church.... The Armenian Church in the USA, France and other countries. Other groups are the Armenian political parties, foundations and cultural organizations...The leaders of these institutions are well aware that once the Armenians are integrated into the societies in which they live, the reason for the existence of the said organizations will also cease to exist. There will be no need for an Armenian Church where there is no Armenian population. Therefore the only way of maintaining their *raison d'être* is for the Armenians there to be fully aware of their Armenian identity.

**- What do they do to maintain their Armenian identity in the face of the tendency to assimilate?**

- To depict the events of the First World War as if they were a genocide and a tragic disaster and thus unite the people around this. In other words, to create a common enemy to be united against. As you know hatred makes people united very easily but it is far more difficult to unite them through a common good. The factor which creates the consciousness of being Armenian in the Armenian diaspora is the claims of genocide. As soon as these allegations are dropped, we will witness complete assimilation. Local Armenian churches will be closed, local Dashnak parties will cease to exist and large foundations will become ineffective. The interesting thing is that they claim they do not hate anybody...They say, "we want historical justice to be served". Words like historical justice sound good yet they are not concepts that hold any legal validity. Events take place in history, they end and new

arrangements are created accordingly. History has always been like this. The Ottoman, Austro-Hungarian and Russian Empires were all dismantled following the First World War. New arrangements were made after this and new maps were drawn accordingly. The rest is no longer significant from a political perspective because a new political order had been created. Therefore, the Armenians are in no position to make any historical demands. If we would be to deal with 1915 we would see that the historical reorganization for this period was made in 1918 and in 1923 for Turkey. A second war followed and led to a reorganization which occurred in the region in 1945-1946. Yet another political reorganization took place in 1991-1992. There is no point in returning to 1915 today and making political demands. I was in Brussels before the Southern Caucasus Report of Per Gahrton was published. I talked about the matter to some members of the European Parliament. I asked the following question: "Would you politically accept an allegation about 1915?" None of them said that they would. Yet the Armenians still believe that this can be done, that a return to that date is possible, that they can reverse the clock.

***- It is known that an ordinary citizen living in Armenia has little to do with all this. Is not it the Armenians of the diaspora and the Armenian authorities who keep the allegations on the agenda?***

- As I just stated, their very existence depends on it. A part of the Armenian population reacts negatively to this situation. The political parties, foundations and churches in the diaspora are continuously brainwashing people. They are now in the fourth generation after 1915. Let us analyze the hatred and antagonism towards Turks, in line with the generations. Under normal circumstances a psychological and sociological analysis should yield the result that the first generation Armenians are the ones who are supposed to hate the Turks most. They are the ones who lived through war and experienced the suffering. The second generation is composed of their children. They must have emotions that are weaker than the first generation, yet still quite strong on the overall. The third generation should have far weaker emotions because practically they do not know anyone from the first generation that had suffered.

***- Does the third and fourth generations have an ill-  
psychology to be still living in the 1910s?***

- Yes. That would be the finding of a normal psychological and sociological analysis. For them it is the exact opposite of what one would expect to find; the third and fourth generations bear the greatest hatred against the Turks. The first and second generations have weaker feelings of hatred. The Armenian Church, political parties and other diaspora organizations brainwashed the third and fourth generations into hating the Turks. People that did not witness the events react in the worst way when they hear the word "Turk". This can only be seen as a psychological case. But one cannot acquire this condition by himself, it must be injected by someone else. Someone is constantly feeding them with hate. That is the most frightening part of the matter. Armenian intellectuals are also aware of the situation but they are scared of confessing it. Some say that the situation arises from "the traumatic events that have taken place". What traumatic events? Fictitious trauma if I may say so. The Armenians who murdered the Turkish diplomats were all from the third generation. They were persons who had never witnessed the events whatsoever. We can summarize the whole issue in the following way: This is a way certain interest groups have chosen to maintain their existence. In other words some interest groups are abusing the Armenians in the diaspora. This is what lies at the root of these developments. Let's put it this way; if there was no Armenian society in the USA there would be no Apostolic Gregorian priests, they would have to go to Echmiadzin, but would they ever? Nobody would leave the USA to return to Armenia in its current condition.

***- Recently a Turkish-Armenian Reconciliation Commission was formed. On the Armenian side there were Armenians who were not citizens of Armenia. What do you think could be the idea behind inviting Armenians who are not citizens of Armenia to the Commission?***

- That was an idea conjured up so that the entire Armenian people would be represented. But, the Armenians of Armenia have no such feelings or do not have the same mentality. You can't say that they are very friendly towards Turkey but they live their daily life. As such they do not face the constant story of the genocide and therefore they have far weaker negative sentiments towards Turkey and the Turks.

***- The Institute for Armenian Research which operates under the Center for Eurasian Strategic Studies decided to organize a symposium on the anniversary of the assassination of Talat Pasha. How did this idea come about?***

- We came upon this idea some time ago. But I believe the terrorist attacks of September 11 lie at the root of this initiative. This event caused the world once again to focus on terror. Then, one day as we were talking among each other we thought of the date when Talat Pasha was murdered. We are bringing together people from all over the world who studied this matter. Turkish Minister of Culture expressed a great interest in a symposium on Talat Pasha and terror. We would not have achieved such a high level of participation had he not given his assistance.

**- Why do you think attacks of Armenian terror organizations that targeted Turkish diplomats in particular were initiated in 1973?**

- The first attack took place in 1973 when an Armenian named Yanikyan killed the Turkish Council General in Los Angeles, Mehmet Baydar and his deputy Bahadir Demir. Yet this was not an act of organized terror. In fact Yanikyan was known to be mentally unstable. However, his acts found such wide support among radical Armenian political circles that came under the impression that they could further their cause by killing Turkish diplomats. Until that day Armenian claims had found little interest in the world. When the Yanikyan incident was widely covered by the world media the extremist Armenian circles came to believe that they had discovered a window of opportunity. In their opinion, killing Turkish diplomats would make their cause more popular in the international press. At this stage there is an important point that must be made: Yanikyan committed murders in 1973 and Turkey intervened militarily in the Cyprus problem in 1974. The Cyprus military operation meant that Greece would start opposing Turkey in the strongest way possible. It was during this period that the Armenians received a great deal of support from Greece. However, Greece has never acknowledged this publicly.

**- Do you believe that it was a coincidence that the Armenian murders of Turks reached their peak when Turkey made a military operation in Cyprus?**

- Not necessarily. Anyway, in those days the Armenian diaspora found a new ally in Greece. Greece supplied them with significant aid but never admitted this. Almost all murders of Turkish diplomats were conducted in a professional manner, meaning they were well planned in advance, not that someone was upset and shot the other on the spur of the moment.

**- How did the murders by the Armenian terror organization of ASALA suddenly stop?**

- These murders continued for 11 years. 34 Turkish diplomats were killed in this time-span. 4 were Ambassadors, 4 Consul Generals and one Military Attaché. Terrorism is blind. It was used as a means to reach political aims. The violence spins out of control after some time. This is the nature of terror all over the world and it was no different for Armenian terror. The turning point was the massacre at Orly, France. Of those killed there as a result of the explosion, two were Turks and six foreigners. The foreign press which did not support Armenian terror but did not openly condemn it either took a clearly negative attitude when it saw that the terror had begun to target non-Turks as well. Not only had the Armenians erred in their target, but also their policy became a boomerang this time. Instead of being able to publicize their cause they began to draw criticism. Their financial aid was cut off. Some times later it was all over. Later Armenians tried hard to ensure that this period would not be remembered or talked about because this terror era is something to be ashamed of and a disgrace for the Armenians.

**- Did not these Armenian terrorists consider the difficult position they were placing the Armenians living in Turkey into while they were killing all those people with the aim of publicizing their cause?**

- They paid absolutely no attention to the Armenians living in Turkey. I was in Turkey during those years. I saw clearly that the Armenians living in Turkey had serious problems, they were even scared. I also would like to stress this; whenever the Armenian problem escalates the moral price is paid by the Armenians living in Turkey.

**- Why do you think resolutions that recognize the Armenian genocide are being tried to brought to the agenda of the parliaments of Western countries in recent years?**

- The answer of this question is very complex. It varies according to each country and each incident. There are 11 countries that recognize the Armenian genocide. Here you will find two types of countries. In the first type the most important reason is the Armenian diaspora that lives in that country. This is the case in approximately 9 of the 11 countries. In the remaining two- Greece and Southern Cyprus- the situation is different. It is not

possible to say that the Armenians living there have any significant power. These countries have recognized the genocide only because of their traditional animosity towards Turks.

**- How about the situation in the European Parliament case?**

- As far as I can see there is an overt or even secret coalition of those who do not want Turkey to integrate into the EU at all or those who do not want Turkey to become an EU member now. The Armenian matter seems to be a part of the negative atmosphere against Turkey in this forum. When a resolution on the Armenian matter is brought the table it is not supported due to its content but rather because it is a part of the general anti-Turkey campaign. I would like to draw your attention to an important point. The resolutions adopted in both National Parliaments and in the European Parliament are only recommendatory, meaning they lack any enforcement mechanism. This, however, does not mean that they are unimportant. They are quite boring

**- Don't these resolutions reflect the anti-Turkish aims and mentality ?**

Certainly, they do so. The image of Turkey has been deteriorating since the 1980's- even the 1970's – for a number of reasons. That is bad enough. When you add genocide which is the worst crime committed against humanity on top to all this you really hit rock bottom on the image scale. Such an image may have a very negative effect on our claim to EU membership than our economic problems do. I think that is where the importance of the resolutions taken against us come into play. Our image which is not too bright anyway is further tarnished. The resolutions may not have any sanctions attached to them but they do cause harm anyway. They harm us also in the following way: When such decisions are taken Turkey rejects them. But the relations with the states whose parliament adopts these resolutions are also damaged, as has been the case with France. A year has gone by since the French Parliament adopted a Law concerning the Armenian "genocide" and things still have not settled between the two countries. I receive negative responses when I express this view. I am told that the French also suffer from the consequences of the souring of bilateral relations. Surely this has important effects on the French. But we must know that this situation also caused significant impacts on Turkey. France is a country that

supports the accession of Turkey to the EU. French policy on the Eastern Mediterranean and the views of Turkey on the same topic overlap. France is a very important partner in the military and technical fields. When our relations are damaged both states suffer. Therefore, although these resolutions have no enforcement attached to them they do cause serious harm to bilateral relations.

**- As far as I know an American researcher and writer called Sam Weems has written a book in response to the allegations of genocide. I was told that his arguments against the genocide are parallel to the arguments of Turkey. Could you give us some more information on this?**

- Sure. The name of the book is "Armenia: A Great Deception". Sam Weems conducted extensive research into many documents. However I have not seen the book yet. It will be published in the USA on April 6th by St. John's Press. The book has already caused great protests from the Armenians because until now there were only books written by Armenians, only their views were voiced. That is why this new book is being received with great interest.

**- For what reason did Sam Weems decide to write a book on this issue?**

- Because he believed that a grave injustice is being done to the Turks. He probably is of the opinion that Turkey and the Turks are unable to make themselves heard properly.

*Portrait – Ömer Lütem*

*Mr. Lütem completed his secondary school at the Galatasaray High School and was later graduated from the Faculty of Political Sciences, the University of Ankara. He entered the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1957 and served in different posts. He was appointed as ambassador to Sofia in 1983 and remained there until 1989. This 6 year-period witnessed the forced name changing campaign directed at the Turkish minority of Bulgaria by the communist regime in Sofia. He returned to Ankara shortly before the end of the ordeal. The first volume of his memoirs of the period was published. He served as Deputy Undersecretary for a period in Ankara. He was posted as Ambassador to the Vatican and held his last official position as Permanent Representative of Turkey to UNESCO. He retired in 1998. Mr. Lütem first directed the Balkans division of the Center for Eurasian Strategic Studies (ASAM). He later became the director of the Institute for Armenian Research which was founded as a branch of ASAM a year ago.*



# BOOK TAKES A CLOSER LOOK AT EGOYAN'S ARARAT\*

Fatma DEMIRELLI\*\*

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'It is hard for members of the diaspora to feel like Armenians if they do not hate Turkey. The same thing is true for Egoyan. He even did not accept that he was an Armenian. He became an Armenian when he started to hate Turks'

Talented Armenian - Canadian director Atom Egoyan's *Ararat*, which its promoters said is a 'film on the Armenian genocide,' was shown at the Cannes Film Festival earlier this week, intensifying further an already ongoing controversy. Many are concerned that *Ararat* will be a second 'Midnight Express,' leaving irremediable traces on the image of Turks and Turkey. But the point is that this may not even be all, because in addition to the image, the film tackles a highly political and inflammatory issue, the alleged genocide. Ankara - based Institute for Armenian Research senior researchers **Şenol Kantarcı** and **Assist Prof. Dr. Sedat Laçiner** perhaps have been the first to react and draw attention to what the film may do to Turkey. Their book, 'Ararat: Artistic Armenian Propaganda' is set to reach bookstores next week. Our lengthy interview with the two authors revolved around 'Ararat', which they described as 'artistic propaganda.' At one point, **Assist. Prof. Dr. Laçiner** suggested legal action against the film, saying it contained racism. The authors also explained how the film was linked to an 'identity problem' of the Armenian diaspora and the appeal of the film's promoters to the arguments of an 'Islamic - Christian confrontation' that intensified after the Sept. 11 attacks.

**- *Ararat is not the first film that tackles the alleged Armenian genocide. You say in your book that there have been around 50 such films long before Ararat. Then what makes it so special? Why is it so heavily on the agenda?***

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\* Interview published by daily *Turkish News* on 24 May 2002.

\*\* Correspondent, *Turkish News*.

**LAÇINER:** First of all, its director, Atom Egoyan, is a very well-known figure. He is the 'national pride' of Canada. One other factor is its timing. It closely followed efforts in the parliaments of different countries to have resolutions passed that recognize the alleged Armenian genocide. Third, it was put on display after an extensive promotion campaign. A serious propaganda campaign was underway throughout the 2.5 years that elapsed since Egoyan and his team started to shoot the film. He invited journalists to the film set and told them that he was working on a film that would uncover the 'genocide.' This was quite unusual in a peaceful and quiet country like Canada. Egoyan's fame in Canada and his and his wife's close ties to France were also effective. The great fuss about the film in Turkey is also understandable because this film was the latest and most unbearable of Armenian efforts against Turkey, and as such it was the last drop to pour into the glass.

**- You refer to Ararat as an 'artistic propaganda' in your book. Why did you prefer to opt for such a description?**

**LAÇINER:** Art has been frequently used for political purposes. Turkey, however, is not aware that it may face psychological warfare through such means as sports, literature, art and it is still preoccupied with classical warfare, such as actual war or terrorist attacks. Armenian politics frequently resort to art as a way of achieving its goals. There are dozens of films, books, and plays that concentrate on the alleged genocide, yet Turkey is hardly aware of their existence. *Ararat* is indeed a perfect example in this regard. Our book is not really on *Ararat* or Egoyan. It is meant to open Turkey's eyes to this fact.

**- You haven't watched the film but had time to extensively examine the scenario. What is your impression about the film? What is the image of Turks as represented in the film for instance?**

**KANTARCI:** This is the conclusion we reached after reading the script: It smells of propaganda. It attempts to give the image that Ararat and Lake Van belong to the Armenians; it ponders on the question whether ASALA was a terrorist organization or a group of heroic men, and concentrates on the political message that Turkey should recognize the alleged genocide. In short, all the themes of Armenian propaganda that have crystallized especially in the post-1960 era were used in the film.

**- To what extent do you think, the film is a piece of art and to what extent is it a tool for propaganda?**

**LAÇINER:** That was indeed a question that kept my mind busy for a long time. Only reading the scenario would not be sufficient to get the answer. One has to have a familiarity with Egoyan, characteristics of Armenian movies and how these movies are used for propaganda purposes. Some clichés are used in all propaganda films, not only in Armenian ones. For instance, the 'bad guys' are inhumane characters, whose sole job is to perpetrate atrocities and kill. They are ugly, they have no family, they are depicted as sort of 'creatures' or 'monsters.' There are more specific clichés about Turks; they are barbarians and the 'scourge of God.' We examined Ararat to find out whether it used these clichés. We saw that both kinds of clichés, both the ones that are general to all propaganda films and the ones about Turks, have been used in Ararat. Turkish soldiers in Ararat are coarsely big, they have dirty faces, they have no families, their sole activity is to kill and torture Armenians. Armenians, on the other hand, are people with families, children, problems of different kinds, etc., that is, they are people like us. The film classifies the world as a civilized one and a non-civilized one. The latter is populated by Turks, the former comprises of Armenians, flanked by Americans, the French, etc. The film repeats usual propaganda theses and clichés, whose main feature is that they lack a documented basis, and which have been used in a number of visual or literary works in the past. A number of unsubstantiated theses and slogans, used by Armenians in every platform, are incorporated by the intellectual director into the film.

*- You were not impressed artistically then?*

**LAÇINER-KANTARCI:** We do not believe the film makes any artistic contribution. We predicted that the film would be the worst film by Egoyan and this prediction has now been proved.

*- In your book, you link 'Ararat' to an identity problem of the Armenian diaspora. How did you get this interesting linkage?*

**LAÇINER:** Our book extensively touches on the life of Egoyan. From the years of his childhood, Egoyan was exposed to the impact of three different cultures: Armenian culture, Arabic culture - Egoyan was born in Egypt and his family migrated to Canada when he was four - and Canadian culture, in which he grew up. He was to incline towards the most powerful of them. Armenian culture is weak in terms of major cultural components, such as

the spoken language and the common history. Egoyan is a good example for all members of the Armenian diaspora indeed. Faced with the serious threat of assimilation in countries in which they live, most of which have a national culture much stronger than that of the Armenians, these people have to find a factor that would define and strengthen the notion of Armenian culture, and they opted to do it with the help of 'the other.' Turkey and Turks represent the 'other' against which Armenian national identity and culture acquire a meaning. There is one factor that unites them all and it is the ideal of a 'Greater Armenia' that would be established in parts of Turkish territory. By turning the events of 1915 into a legend that is passed from one generation to the next, Armenians form a national culture, which is fed by enmity against Turkey and Turks. Therefore, it is hard for the members of the diaspora to feel like Armenians if they do not hate Turkey. The same thing is true for Egoyan. He even did not accept that he was an Armenian. He became an Armenian when he started to hate Turks.

***- There is one point that sounded very interesting for me. In Turkey, we are used to being worried, angry, furious about the Armenian lobby's efforts to convince Western parliaments to recognize the alleged genocide through legislative resolutions. You say in the book that Armenians are very active in the vast Central Asian geography and Russia as well. Does this mean Turkey may soon face an 'Armenian genocide' wave this time from Central Asia, the land of Turkic republics?***

**LAÇINER:** Such a wave already exists. But Turkey unfortunately has a bad habit; its radars are directed only to the West. However, the Armenian lobby is active in all parts of the world, ranging from the Far East to Africa. The prevailing belief in the Turkic republics of Central Asia is that the events of 1915 amounted to an Armenian genocide. This is so because even the text books in state schools incorporate Armenian theses. What is terrifying is that Turkey is not even aware of that, and as such it cannot explain its own theses even to these sister states. This is because of this excessive preoccupation with what happens in the West. My personal view is that Turkey should give priority to its region i.e. the Caucasus, Russia, Central Asia, Iran. Then it should move onto making itself clear to the West.

***- Perhaps Turkey is not very much cognizant of this, but Armenian propaganda in the West has heavily made use of***

***the theme of a Muslim-Christian confrontation. You mention that Ararat appeals to the same notion and cites a comment on the film, which says to Americans 'you lost 4,000 of your beloved ones and we lost 1.5 million.' Could you elaborate on this aspect of the film?***

**LAÇINER:** Armenians are trying to appeal to as many people as possible. In this regard, they attempted to use the post-Sept. 11 political conjuncture. They accepted as truth the faulty argument that Islamic and Christian worlds are in a conflict and tried to use such a wrong perception in the service of their objectives. Ararat's promoters took the same line. What made us sorry is that a highly-enlightened person like Egoyan took up such an oversimplified attitude and took the easy way to success and prestige.

***- So how was the initial reaction following its showing in Cannes? Was the film up to Egoyan's expectations?***

**LAÇINER:** We argued that the film was a bad film and film commentators agreed that the film was not a good one. A good product requires effort, pain and meticulousness. Prejudice and rough classifications of good and evil would not help improve the artistic quality of a film. I do not think Egoyan is doing it with bad intentions. The point is that he is acting like a believer and as such does not question what is true and what is not. Yet, this does not justify what he did, because he, as an intellectual, has a responsibility to question. He did not question and acted like a layman, as an ordinary Armenian.

It was not up to film makers' expectations because they hoped for an intense period of discussion on the alleged genocide. But there is no indication in comments on the film to that effect so far.

The film does not contribute to peace and dialogue between Turkey and Armenia at all. And there is one important point as well. Armenian propaganda is an 'economic sector.' People talk about a \$50-60 million budget for Ararat. Given that Egoyan's most expensive film cost \$5 million and that the budget of an average Hollywood film is about \$5 - 6 million, one can get a glimpse of the size of the financial dimension of the film. Now that the film is a failure in artistic terms, I think the Armenian lobby, which made great financial contributions to the film, will have some questions on how their money was used. Egoyan may have difficulties in explaining to the Armenian diaspora how he spent that amount of money on such a low-quality film.

**- Is there anything special about the timing of the film? Not a long time ago, there were resolutions calling for the recognition of the alleged genocide. They followed one another Such as in the United States, France, the European Parliament, etc. Now all eyes are on Ararat. How should one interpret this sequence?**

**KANTARCI:** I do not know for sure, but I doubt that the film may be setting the stage for some future developments, such as the recognition of the alleged genocide in the United States or somewhere else.

**- First there was the ASALA terror and killings of Turkish diplomats in Western countries. Somewhere in the mid - 1980s, Armenians relinquished terror and a new stage in which these legal efforts, to get the alleged genocide recognized, came onto the scene. Does Ararat signify passage to a new stage?**

**LAÇINER:** Instead of passing from one stage to another, I guess, there is a continuation. Egoyan's start in shooting the film coincided with an important time period. At that time, resolutions were being presented to national parliaments and international organizations one after another. The Armenian lobby calculated that these resolutions would be passed and then Ararat would come to complete their efforts and shape world opinion to accept that there really was an Armenian genocide in 1915. But there was one very important and uncalculated development, the Sept. 11 attacks. It was hard to convince the world to support anti-Turkey theses in the political conjuncture of the post-Sept. 11 era, where Turkey's importance came to be appreciated more and more deeply. Therefore, Ararat could not catch the wind and was a little bit late in this sense.

**- A group of people in Turkey have been rather optimistic. They said the film may contribute to Turkish - Armenian dialogue or some others opted to disregard the film, saying Turkey should not bother because there are such negative films about every other country. How do you evaluate this optimist reaction?**

**KANTARCI:** There were examples of such reaction in the press before the film was shown in Cannes. But over the last few days that elapsed since the showing of the film, optimism was replaced by a negative reaction against the film.

We tend to make a certain mistake often; we mix things up. Yes, Turkey is a country which makes grave mistakes in several fields, especially in the field of freedoms. However, there is nothing to defend in Ararat in the name of liberalism. One should be very careful on this point: We may be angry with our government for its mistakes, but this does not mean we have to automatically accept charges on such critical issues, where indeed we have very powerful arguments. I request everyone to speak on the Armenian issue to read something and have some minimal historical information before commenting.

**- How should Turkey react? Some argue that Turkey's tough reaction would have no effect but to promote the film. Should Turkey keep silent?**

**LAÇINER:** Turkey's reaction to a challenge from abroad has been 'either all or none.' It is either entirely silent or reacts excessively and acts like a 'bull in a china shop.' Now it should be moderate. It is one thing to use art as a means to advance political objectives but it is another thing to insult a person. Thanks to Turkey's inability to take effective measures, everyone in every country of the world just goes ahead with insulting Turkey and Turks. Turkey did not do what it was supposed to do in response to the film 'Midnight Express' and had to suffer its consequences for two decades. Ararat has a criminal content. It insults the Van governor of the time, accuses him of torturing Armenians. It is the duty of his family to sue the film on charges of insult. Turkish soldiers come under unjust attacks, their families could apply to courts. What is more, the film has a racist content. That should be tackled.

Turkey should react in the similar way, through films, books, documentaries. Egoyan says he has 'poetic license' when he faces criticisms about the film. He is right. Politicians cannot tackle a film, only artists can do so. I personally think that politicians should keep away from the Ararat controversy. Turkish NGOs and the Turkish cinema sector have the duty to handle the issue.

**- You looked into the historical side of the controversy in your book as well. What did you see? To what extent is Ararat in line with your findings?**

**KANTARCI:** Egoyan says he totally based his film on a book written by an American missionary, Clarence Ussher, who was in Van then. I conducted my studies along two lines: first to find out

whether Ararat was really based on this book, and second what really happened in 1915. Egoyan's argument is very convincing for the audience because in this way they think that the film is objective. Yet, a comparison between Ararat's scenario and Ussher's book reveals many discrepancies. Ussher's book made no reference at all to the terrifying massacre and torture scenes of the film. Ussher's book contains pictures of Armenians producing bullets, Armenian soldiers in uniform shooting at Turkish soldiers from trenches, a clear indicative of the fact that the Turkish army and Armenians engaged in a war at that time. These were simply lacking in Ararat.

Egoyan focused on the Van revolt by Armenians in 1915, but does not say that the revolt ended with the victory of Armenians, when the Van governor was forced to flee and was replaced by an Armenian at the end of a joint attack by the Russian army, which entered the city at that time, and local Armenian forces. This attack resulted in the killing of more than 20,000 Van residents, this is what the historical sources report.



## CONFERENCES

### **TURKISH CONGRESS ON ARMENIAN STUDIES 20-21 April 2002, Ankara**

#### **Center For Eurasian Strategic Studies - Institute for Armenian Research**

More than 120 researchers, who work primarily on the Armenian issue, Armenians and Armenia came together at the Turkish Congress on the Armenian Studies organized by the Institute for Armenian Research. The Institute, which is founded by the Center for Eurasian Strategic Studies in 2001 conducts scholarly research on Armenian studies. The Congress was convened in the National Library congress halls in Ankara on 20-21 April 2002. The participants of the Congress made two day-long presentations on history, law, religion, culture, literature, psychology, sociology, politics, international relations and terrorism within the framework of Armenian studies. At the final session of the Congress a declaration was duly discussed and adopted by the plenary.

The Turkish Congress on the Armenian Studies was the first of its kind in Turkey and, most probably, the biggest event in the world in terms of the number of academic papers presented. From among some 80 universities, institutes and individual researchers all over Turkey, 114 papers were presented, in three meeting rooms simultaneously for two full days. Paper presentation was complemented with questions and discussion periods. The papers will be published as conference proceedings and be made available to a broader intellectual interest.

As being a Turkish congress, presentation of papers was only open to Turkish speaking researchers. Of course the participation as audience was open to anyone who feels interested in Armenian studies. Some important Turkish personalities of Armenian descent, including Patriarch Mutafyan, the Armenian Catholic Archbishop and prominent members of the Armenian community and press in Turkey were invited by the organizing committee.

The Congress was organized under the auspices of the President of the Republic, Ahmet Necdet Sezer, who sent a message of congratulations, as did Prime Minister Ecevit and Deputy Prime Minister Mesut Yılmaz, for the success of the meeting.

The Congress aimed to present to the world, including to the Armenian and Turkish peoples, a common view of Turkish scholars on the recent developments by bringing together all Turkish scholars working on Armenian studies; increasing interest for scholarly Armenian studies and by creating a dialogue platform based on tolerance and common sense for a better understanding between the Turkish and Armenian peoples.

The Turkish Congress on the Armenian Studies discussed the genocide claim within a historical and contemporary perspective. The papers presented at the Congress concluded that the Armenian genocide allegations were mostly based on unsubstantiated and distorted documents. The supporters of the Armenian genocide view also have abstained from taking into account archival documents expressing opposing views and counter arguments, stated the Congress. It was underlined that the term "genocide" is a well-defined legal term and it is impossible to call every instance of great human losses genocide, including especially the 1915 Relocation. The Congress was convinced that whatever was the size of the human losses as a result of the inter-communal clashes during the First World War as well as natural factors such as epidemics, cold and starvation, it could not be called genocide, based on the research conducted so far. Turkish authors maintained that more research should be conducted on the massacre of Turks by armed Armenian gangs in the said period. The Congress also called upon the Parliaments that adopted genocide resolutions to reconsider their point. It is also pointed out that such a historical issue should not be a subject for legislation as the members of the parliaments are not historians and they have no legislative powers over the events that took place nearly a hundred years ago.

The Congress pointed out that archival work is cardinal for research on the subject and called for the Armenians, both in Armenia and Diaspora, and other governments to open up their archives as soon as possible. Gratitudes to the Directorate of the Turkish Republic State Archives were also expressed by the participants, since Turkish archives are now open to all

researchers and many archival documents were also made available through internet.

Turkish academics are of the opinion that terror must always be condemned notwithstanding its purpose and supporters. The Congress strongly condemned the Armenian terror, that resulted in the killing of innocent Turkish diplomats, other Turkish citizens and the citizens of other countries. The Congress called upon Armenia and Armenian diaspora organizations to condemn the Armenian terror and openly declare that they do not approve such aggression. The Congress also called all states to place Armenian terror organizations in their lists of terrorist organizations.

It is also stated by the Congress that peace and stability in the Caucasus could only be possible if all states act in accordance with the principles of international law, such as the recognition of territorial integrity of all states and good neighborhood. Turkish academics maintained that the current Armenian occupation of the neighboring Azerbaijani territory and Armenia's refusal of the recognition of the territorial integrity of Turkey and territorial demands threaten regional peace. The Congress made it clear that prosperity of all peoples living in the region is closely linked with peace and stability.

Turkish scholars proposed that scholars of Armenian studies with different, even contrasting, views should meet and discuss their ideas. The Congress stated that the Armenian scholars have never agreed to come together with the Turkish authors in academic platforms so far and appealed to Armenian writers for the realization of such a dialogue atmosphere. It is clearly pointed out by the Congress that the only way for reconciliation is through dialogue, and Turkish scholars are ready for academic challenges, something expected from the Armenian scholars as well.

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## **1. INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM OF ARMENIAN PROBLEM OF TURKEY**

**23 – 25 May 2002**

**Manisa**

International Symposium of Armenian Problem of Turkey was organized by Celal Bayar University and Manisa Governorship and

was held on 23-25 May 2002. There were 24 speakers in the Symposium. From the Institute for Armenian Research, Assist. Prof. Dr. Kamer KASIM and lecturer Şenol KANTARCI and from Center for Eurasian Strategic Studies, Caucasus Desk Dr. Yaşar KALAFAT and Mahmut Niyazi SEZGİN presented papers in the Symposium. The largest participation was from Celal Bayar University, Manisa. From Celal Bayar University, Assist. Prof. Dr. Galip ALÇITEPE, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Nihat AYCAN, Prof. Dr. Mehmet ÇELİK, Assist. Prof. Dr. Nejdet BİLGİ, Assist. Prof. Dr. Ramazan ÇALIK, Assist. Prof. Dr. Mevlüt ÇELEBİ, Assist. Prof. Dr. Nurettin GÜLMEZ, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Zeynelabidin MAKAS, Assist. Prof. Dr. İ. Murat YILDIRIM and lecturer Veysi DÖRTBUDAK participated the Symposium. Besides that Prof. Dr. Sadık ACAR from Dokuz Eylül University, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Esat ARSLAN from Bilkent University, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Aygün H. ATTAR from Dumlupınar University, Assoc. Prof. Dr. from Baku State University, Assist. Prof. Dr. Hasan BABACAN and Prof. Dr. Bayram KODAMAN from Süleyman Demirel University, Prof. Dr. Fikret TÜRKMEN, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Mehmet ERSAN and Prof. Dr. Ahmet ÖZGİRAY from Ege University, Dr. Sabir RÜSTEMHANLI, Member of the Parliament in Azerbaijan, Erich FEIGL from Austria, Kerstin TOMENENDAL and İnanç FEIGL from Austria Turkish Science Office participated the Symposium.

Wide range of topics related to the Armenian problem was discussed during the Symposium. Some of them were Factors, which shaped Turkish-Armenian relations before the Ottoman Era, Armenian terror in Russian archive documents. The Year 1915 In Ottoman State According to Austrian Documents, Armenian problem and Franz Werfel.

From the Institute for Armenian Research Assist. Prof. Dr. Kamer KASIM's paper titled, "Armenian Diaspora's Affect On Turkish-Armenian Relations". In his paper Kamer KASIM argued that diaspora criticized Armenian President Ter-Petrosyan due to his policy towards Turkey and the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. The pressure from diaspora and diaspora based parties was forced Ter-Petrosyan to resign. Paradoxically, Ter-Petrosyan's policy towards the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict prevented normalization of Turkey's relations with Armenia and the same policy also led to the resignation of Ter-Petrosyan. Kamer Kasim argued that with the election of Kocharyan diaspora's influence on Armenian foreign policy increased, which had also implications on Armenia's relations with Turkey. Kocharyan's uncompromising stand in the

peace process of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is not helpful for Turkish-Armenian relations. Kamer Kasım argued that It would be Armenia's economic and political interest to normalize its relations with Turkey and other neighbors and to manage this Armenian administration should be free from the heavy influence of diaspora and other radical elements.

From Institute For Armenian Research Şenol KANTARCI's speech titled as "Armenian Events In Van In the Memoirs Of An American Missioner". He analysed how Armenian events in Van was presented in the Clarence D. Ussher's memoir, which was published in Boston in 1917 and named as "An American Physician In Turkey"

The reason that Kantarcı analysed the memoirs of Clarence D. Ussher was that Ussher was a missioner, who worked in Van during the Armenian revolt and attacks to the non-Armenian residence of the city.

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### **THE 81. ANNIVERSARY OF TALAT PASHA'S ASSASSINATION: A LOOK ON INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM**

**15 March**

**Pera Palas - Istanbul**

The Institute for Armenian Research organized an international symposium on the 15th of March named "The 81. Anniversary of Talat Pasha's Assassination: A Look On International Terrorism" together with the University of Istanbul under the auspices of the Ministry of Culture. The symposium took place at the Pera Palas Hotel in Istanbul and lasted from 9:00 – 18:15 h.

International and Turkish participants of the symposium were:

Samuel A. WEEMS (USA), Prof. Dr. Otto WINKELMANN (Germany), Prof. Dr. Peter BENDIXEN (Germany), Assoc. Prof. Dr. Kalerya BELLOVA (Russia), Prof. Erich FEIGL (Austria), Prof. Dr. Nasib NASSIBLI (Azerbaijan), Prof. Dr. Seçil AKGÜN, Rtd. Ambassador Bilal ŞİMŞİR, Prof. Dr. Mehmet SARAY, Prof. Dr. Arslan TERZİOĞLU, Rtd. Ambassador and Director of the Institute for Armenian Research Ömer E. LÜTEM.

The opening speech was held by the Minister of Culture, İstemihan Talay. The symposium was made up of 4 sections. In

the first section Prof Seçil Akgün from the Faculty of History of the Middle East Technical University in Ankara, presented 'The First Armenian Incidents'. Prof Arslan Terzioğlu from the Medical Faculty of the University of Istanbul draw a connection between 'The Assassination of Talat Pasha and Bahaddin Shakir in Berlin and the Armenian Relocation'. Assoc. Prof. Dr. Kalerya Bellova, who is a turcologist from the Institute for International Relations in Moscow, investigated on the Armenian issue in the Russian archives and presented 'The Assassination of Cemal Pasha in Tiflis'.

The second section went on in the historical line with the presentation of Prof. Erich Feigl, who showed an interesting new perspective of the famous propaganda - novel 'The 40 Days of Musa Dagh' in his presentation 'Talat Pasha: The Slandering of a statesman by Franz Werfel'. Prof. Dr. Otto Winkelmann from the Faculty of Medical History of the University of Hamburg presented 'The Armenian Question in the Memoirs of Ernst von Düring Pasha (1858-1944)' – a German doctor, who served for the Ottoman Army. Samuel Weems, a retired prosecutor from Arkansas recently published his book named 'The Great Deception. Secrets of a Christian Terrorist State', where he reflects the unlawful way of Armenia and Armenians to gain American tax payers money. In his presentation Weems draw attention on 'Armenian Terrorism in the USA'. The 3rd section started with the presentation of Rtd. Ambassador Bilal Şimşir on 'Diplomat Victims of Armenian Terrorism'. Rtd. Ambassador and Director of the Institute for Armenian Research, Ömer E. Lütem stated on 'Armenian Terrorism and the Aftermath'. Prof. Dr. Nasib Nassibli from the Khazar University in Azerbaijan referred to 'The Karabakh Conflict and Armenian Terrorism'.

The 4th and last section was directed to the ways of solving problems between Turkey and Armenia. Prof. Dr. Bendixen from the University of Frankfurt explained the ways of 'The Prevention of Terrorism by Cultural Exchange' and presented a declaration of 'Crossroads, Interdisciplinary Research Platform' signed by several professors internationally. Finally Prof. Dr. Mehmet Saray asked the question 'How can the Problems of the Turkish Armenian Relations be solved?'. The closing speech was held by Rtd. Ambassador Yüksel Söylemez, who underlined the significance of direct dialogue for ending the problems between the two states and people.

## BOOK REVIEW

### **ASAM INSTITUTE FOR ARMENIAN RESEARCH TAKES A CLOSER LOOK AT ARMENIAN PROPAGANDA**

Book's Name: "ARARAT, ARTISTIC ARMENIAN PROPAGANDA"

Book's Original Name: **Ararat, Sanatsal Ermeni Propagandası**. Language: **Turkish**.

Authors: **Sedat LAÇİNER** and **Şenol KANTARCI**. Ankara: Institute for Armenian Research Publication, May 2002. 167 pages + xii + footnotes + bibliography + photos. ISBN: 975-6769-47-5.

Publisher: EREN, Konrad Adenauer Cad., No. 61, YILDIZ, ÇANKAYA, ANKARA, TURKEY.

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#### **Assist. Prof. Dr. İhsan BAL\***

Armenian - Canadian film director Atom Egoyan's Ararat film, which its promoters said is a "film on the Armenian genocide", was shown at the Cannes Film Festival in May. Many are concerned that Ararat will be a second "Midnight Express" leaving irremediable traces on the image of Turks and Turkey. ASAM Institute for Armenian Research's Assist. Prof. Dr. Sedat Laçiner and Şenol Kantarcı perhaps have been the first to react and draw attention to what the film may do to Turkey. Their book, which was published by ASAM's Armenian Institute, further focuses on the Armenian propaganda machine and how the extremist political groups abuse the Armenian art, notably Armenian cinema, in order to reach their political aims. The book is in Turkish, yet the authors declared that they intend to publish the 167-page book in English as well.

\* Senior Lecturer in the *Turkish Police Academy*, Ankara. BA (Police Academy), MA (Leicester UK), PhD (Leicester, UK)

The book is divided into two main sections. In the first section, Assist. Prof. Dr. Sedat Laçiner looks at the Armenian propaganda and Armenian cinema as a tool of this propaganda while the second section written by Şenol Kantarcı focuses on the historical facts and comparison of Ararat's claims and the realities.

According to Laçiner, the diaspora Armenian organisations in particular built the Armenian identity on anti-Turkish feelings and they considered the cinema as the most important instrument in order to reach their aim. Laçiner also focuses on Atom Egoyan, director of Ararat film, and details the director's life and its impact on his cinema. Laçiner gives a special attention to the director's childhood. He says

*"Egoyan is an identity-convert. He refused his Armenian identity in the early years and made efforts to be a 'normal' Canadian. He did not speak Armenian. However in the college years the radical Armenian nationalists helped him in building his national identity on anti-Turkish fleeing. Now he had an enemy, and he enjoyed being Armenian. He was Armenian because he was anti-Turkish. The 'genocide legacy' in particular played a crucial role in Egoyan's identity building like many Armenians in the diaspora. Though he had never seen Turkey or met a Turkish before he believed that the Turks had attempted to destroy his race. The nationalist trend in his character became significant when he got married with a fanatic Lebanese Armenian, Arsinée Khanjian".*

According to Laçiner, similar to many converts, Egoyan exaggerated the past in order to legitimate his new identity. Thus "genocide legacy" became the most important and maybe the only uniting factors in the Armenian diaspora and Egoyan was no exception.

The third chapter of Laçiner's study is devoted to the film, Ararat, its script, financial sources and its impact on Armenians and the Western media. Laçiner argues that Ararat is a typical Armenian propaganda film and will damage the attempts for Turkish – Armenian dialogues. Though the director argued the film was a critical cinema film, Laçiner defends that Ararat is Egoyan's one of the worst films in terms of arts. Laçiner further argues,

*"A good product requires effort, pain and meticulousness. Prejudice, ideological considerations and rough classifications of good and evil would not help to improve the artistic quality of a film. I do not think Egoyan is doing it with evil intention. The point*



*is that he is acting like a believer and as such does not question what is true and what is not. As he confessed he even refused to discuss 'the genocide issue'. When you reject a dialogue or debate on an issue you cannot claim that you make a critical film on that subject. Our research clearly proves that the extremist Armenian organisations in Canadian made enormous pressure on Egoyan, and furthermore his wife and his connections pushed him to make such a film. Actually two years ago he said that he was not a history film maker and he rejected to make a film on the 1915 events. It is clear that he could not resist the pressure from the Armenian organisations. Yet, this does not justify what he did, because he, as an intellectual, has a responsibility to question the problem and to search a way to help the Armenians and Turks to understand each other. All Egoyan admirers in Turkey expected a critical film on Turkish-Armenian relations or a film questioning the 'real reasons for the Armenian identity problem'. However it can be argued that Egoyan has chosen the easiest way and acted like a laymen, as an ordinary Armenian. As a result we the Turkish people and the Armenians lost an opportunity. It is unfortunate that Egoyan wasted a chance and now his and our grand-son and grand-daughters will have to face with the same problems."*

The second section of the book is written by researcher Şenol Kantarcı. Kantarcı, first, analyses Ararat's script according to the historical events. Egoyan had claimed that the script was based on the book of Clarence Ussher, who worked as an American missionary in Turkey at that time. Kantarcı compares the script with that book and finds that Egoyan's Ararat does not match with Ussher's book. Many scenes do not exist in Ussher's book while the film, Ararat, distorts many of the events mentioned in the book. Then Kantarcı searches the events mentioned in the script by using other foreign missionaries' memoirs and the archival documents. Kantarcı argues that considered the historical realities and the mentioned book, Egoyan's film is full of mistakes and misjudgements. Egoyan further continues:

*"Egoyan focused on the Armenian revolt in Van in 1915. However he does not say that the revolt ended with the victory of Armenians, when the Van governor was forced to flee and was replaced by an Armenian at the end of a joint attack by the Russian army, which entered the city at that time, and local Armenian forces. The Armenian-Russian joint attack resulted in the killing of more than 20,000 Van residents. However Egoyan's film distorts the historical facts."*

"Ararat, Artistic Armenian Propaganda" book is the Institute's first but will not be the last publication. The Institute, which is the only and first Armenian research organisation in Turkey and possibly the greatest one in the world in terms of the number of the full-time staff employed, conducts research on all dimensions of the Armenian culture, history and political life.

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Book's Name: **THE ARMENIAN QUESTION (1914 - 23)**  
Author: **Mim Kemal ÖKE**. Oxford: the University Printing House, 1988. 295 pages. Bibliography, endnotes.  
ISBN: 9963-565-16-6.

**Damla Bade GÜMÜŞEL\***

Turkey and the world have faced the Armenian terrorism during the 1970's. The Armenian terrorist group, ASALA, had carried out their actions against the Turkish Republic by murdering her diplomats and the officials. The only reason behind this ongoing psychological war against Turkey was to take the "revenge" of the so-called Armenian "genocide" in 1915. By this way their terrorist activities would be justified in the eyes of the Western public. However the operations of ASALA did not last for a long time and now it was time to take this duty for the Armenian diaspora by setting up a propaganda campaign. A large group of scholars from Armenian origin started to write about the Armenian civilians slaughtered by the Turks as during the application of relocation during the World War I. Armenian intellectuals followed a campaign of creating an "evil Turk" image in the Western public opinion even going too far by publishing some fake Ottoman documents. They try to draw some parallels between the Jewish Holocaust and their cause. In addition to these propaganda campaigns, the Armenian lobbies have been using all of their power within the political systems of various western countries in order to force Turkey to accept such a claim of genocide.

Unfortunately, the Turkish side insisted on keeping her silence against the Armenian claims for a very long time, which has created some question marks in the minds of people about the

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\* *ASAM Institute for Armenian Research, Ankara, Turkey.*

credibility of the Turkish side. Some laws on recognition of the so-called Armenian genocide were brought into the Western parliaments and discussed whether to ratify them or not. Such developments in recent years have become one of the biggest foreign policy concerns of Turkey. So, Turkish intellectuals and historians have started to work on this issue to inform the world about the real events that took place during the War and to prove the exaggeration or the fakeness of Armenian claims.

The Armenian Question by Mim Kemal Öke is one of the most remarkable books on this issue. As he also mentioned in his book, his main goal in writing this book was to investigate the Armenian issue without supporting the claims of any side and to build up his research by using the scientific research. According to him, the research on the Armenian issue should not be constrained by the historical facts but should be analyzed from a wider international context. So in this sense, this book is a scientific analysis on the Armenian problem for the readers who want to learn about the issue from every perspective.

In the first chapter, Öke analyzed the Armenian problem and the conditions of the international system by taking the issue from the 19th century until the end of World War I. The most important point about this chapter is that the author did not consider the issue only as a matter of minority problem but as a matter of international politics of that period. 1800's were a century of increased colonial rivalries between the European powers. New powers such as Italy and Germany had entered the international arena with the desire of catching up with the other powers in this colonial race. As the Ottoman Empire got weaker and weaker, it tried to keep its integrity by using the policy of balance of power against colonial powers. Until 1877, Britain was a great supporter of Ottoman integrity because of its security concerns in the East. However, when the Ottomans were defeated in the 1877 Ottoman-Russian War, Britain well understood that it was getting impossible to prevent disintegration of the Ottomans so it decided to secure the roots to its colonies by acquiring the Ottoman lands. In order to increase their influence over the empire, these powers started to propagate the minority groups and declare themselves as the protectorate of the non-Muslim communities of the empire. So it was the beginning of the Armenian problem.

Besides giving a general description of the conditions of the period and the foreign policies of the other powers, the author

also focused on the Ottoman policies towards the Armenians and the other minority groups in order to appease the interventionist states.

Öke, in the next chapter, reviewed how the Armenians were encouraged and propagated to rebel against the Ottomans in the East by support of great powers. He also examined the interests of great powers under supporting the Armenian separatist movement. He stated that such rebels would cause the allied powers to gain a strategic superiority over the Ottomans and the axis powers by reducing the strength of the Ottoman army during the war. Öke underlined the fact that the Armenian separatist movements were not just a struggle of getting their independence in the name of self-determination but was a policy followed by the great powers to accelerate the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. In other words, during the process of Armenian awakening the international factors were much more influential than the nationalist feelings.

In the third chapter, the author focused on how the Armenian problem had been solved until 1923. By the time the war was continuing, the circumstances had been changed. New powers emerged in the scene. In the East, the Bolshevik revolution took place and Tsarist Russia collapsed. Bolsheviks refused all Russian diplomacies and withdrew from the war. This was a very important step for the Kemalist movement because Bolsheviks were ready to give some concessions to Turkey in order to establish their legacy in the world.

On the other hand the allied powers, Britain, the US, France and Italy could not able to come to conclusion during the peace conferences. They did not exactly know how to share the Ottoman lands because some lands were promised to more than one power. For example the area of Kilikya was promised to French and the Armenians at the same time. Such conflicts enabled Turkish diplomacy to increase its capability of maneuvering. Armenian attempts to establish a Greater Armenia had never been realized because it was unacceptable for the interests of the Allies and Soviets. It became so clear that Armenians in the East, just like the Greeks in the West were only the actors of a war strategy designed by great powers.

Öke, in the conclusion part, tried to summarize the Armenian problem, which has been so far described in a detailed way in the

previous chapters. He highlighted how the Ottoman integration policy towards the existing subcultures of the Empire was based on the principles of respect and tolerance. The Ottoman state was able to manage the problems occurred within its foreign subjects without any serious attempts against the state until the introduction of nationalist ideas from the West. Although the Ottomans made so many adjustments in the status of the minorities, they could not keep their unity. The author finally concluded that the minority issue has always been a very sensitive issue in the history of the states and it has been used as means of propaganda and imperialist policies.

The author used a large number of primary and secondary sources as well as foreign archives and official documents. I guess using so many primary sources and foreign archives would satisfy the readers who have doubts about the credibility of the book. In addition to this, the footnotes can be very useful for a further research about the Armenian problem.

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**"SCHOLARSHIP FROM HELL"**

Book's Name: **A PROBLEM FROM HELL: AMERICA AND THE AGE OF GENOCIDE**

Author: **Samantha POWER**. New York: Basic Books Publishing, 2002. 384 pages.

ISBN: 0465061508

**Ercan KARAKOÇ\* and Gökmen KILIÇOĞLU\***

The author of "A Problem from Hell: America and the Age of Genocide", Samantha Power, is Executive Director of the Carr Center for Human Rights Policy at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University. This book deals with "genocide" in the 20th Century and the American reactions to "genocide". The author's stated primary purpose in writing this book is to sensitize both the US government and people at large about the disparity between the great power of America and its government's inadequacy in intervening to stop genocide wherever it is occurring.

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\* Both are Research Assistants at Gebze Institute of Technology, Kocaeli.

In order to explain the term of "genocide", its historical background and meaning, Power chose a number of case studies beginning with the Armenian Relocation, then the Holocaust, Bosnia, Cambodia, Iraq and Rwanda. We will focus our comments and critique on the first chapter of the book called "Race Murder" that deals with the Ottoman - Armenian conflict during the First World War.

Although the author has a legal background it is immediately obvious that she does not have a sufficient grounding in history to tackle a subject as sensitive and controversial as the Ottoman - Armenian conflict, the Armenian revolutionary movements and subsequent relocation of 1915 and its historical interpretation. This point is highlighted by the fact that she begins her book in a totally out of context manner by lauding and praising an Armenian, Soghomon Tehlerian, who assassinated Talat Pasha, one of the leaders of the Ottoman Empire during First World War. The author's claim that the relocation of the Armenian people in the Ottoman Empire was "genocide" is presented as a fact and with very little research or clear evidence to prove this claim. Her bias continues as the chapter refers to no Turkish documents, nor to any objective scholars' and experts' books on this issue. For example, little to no reference can be found to the extensive work carried out by Professors Bernard Lewis, Stanford Shaw and Justin McCarthy. In addition, even though the foundations to her claims lies in a book by the former US Ambassador to Istanbul, Henry Morgenthau: "Ambassador Morgenthau's Story", she does not mention the critique of that book, "The Story Behind Ambassador Morgenthau's Story" written by Heath W. Lowry. In his book, Lowry shows that there are many discrepancies between Morgenthau's book and his diary, letters and reports that were sent to the State Department.

A number of crucial errors that need to be addressed can be found in the book. First of all, Power states that Talat Pasha ordered the roundup and execution of some 250 leading Armenian intellectuals in Istanbul.<sup>1</sup> However, what she does not include is the fact that many of them were members of terrorist organizations and that their arrests came as a direct result of their

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<sup>1</sup> Power, Samantha; *A Problem from Hell: America and the Age of Genocide*, Basic Books Publishing, (New York, 2002), p. 2.

attempts to provoke the Armenian populace to revolt and commit terror against the Ottoman Empire.<sup>2</sup>

Another claim of the author is that Sultan Abdulhamid II killed 200,000 Armenians in 1895 - 96.<sup>3</sup> Once again these numbers are more akin to fiction than fact because Armenian organizations themselves, such as the British-based Anglo-Armenian Committee and Evangelical Alliance, put that figure at 20,000.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, these events occurred during mass rebellions by Armenians in Eastern Anatolia where many Muslims were also killed. The author also mentions that 1,5 million Armenians were killed during these events and the relocation process. However, demographic studies prove that prior to World War I, fewer than 1,5 million Armenians lived in the entire Ottoman Empire. Thus, allegations that more than 1.5 million Armenians from Eastern Anatolia died are false. Justin McCarthy's book<sup>5</sup> "The Population of Ottoman Anatolia and the End of the Empire" covers the whole era and proves beyond doubt that the Armenian population of the Empire as a whole did not exceed 1.3 million. Of this number, hundreds and thousands indeed left for other regions before and during World War I, especially to what was to become Armenia proper, according to estimates given even by Armenian sources, and those who reached their final destination of Ottoman Syria.

The third claim in Power's book is an anecdote in Morgenthau's Story where Talat Pasha allegedly asks Ambassador Morgenthau whether the United States could get the New York Life Insurance Company and Equitable Life of New York, which for years had done business with the Armenians, to send a complete list of the Armenian policyholders to the Turkish authorities. "They are practically all dead now and have left no heirs," Talat Pasha said. "The Government is the beneficiary now."<sup>6</sup> However, Lowry has shown that no such conservation took place and that the only time Morgenthau discussed with Talat Pasha these insurance firms was on April 3, 1915. Lowry qualifies this by pointing out that these

<sup>2</sup> Göyünç, Nejat; "Osmanlı Devleti'nde Ermeniler Hakkında," in Hasan C. Guzel (edt.), *Osmanlı'dan Günümüze Ermeni Sorunu*, (Istanbul, Yeni Türkiye Yayınları, 2001), p. 47.

<sup>3</sup> Power; *ibid*, p. 8.

<sup>4</sup> Kuran, Ercüment; "Tarihte Türkler ve Ermeniler," in Hasan C. Güzel (ed.), *Osmanlı'dan Günümüze Ermeni Sorunu*, (Istanbul: Yeni Türkiye Yayınları, 2001), p. 43.

<sup>5</sup> McCarthy, Justin; *Muslims and Minorities: The Population of Ottoman Anatolia and the End of the Empire*, (New York, New York University Press, 1983).

<sup>6</sup> Power, *ibid*, p. 8.

kinds of conversations and crucial meetings between Morgenthau and Talat Pasha were always reported to the State Department, but that in this case it was not.<sup>7</sup> Lowry goes on to say that there are no documents in the US archives about such a conversation having ever taken place. Lowry, also adds that while Morgenthau was writing his book he was assisted by two Armenian colleagues, his secretary, Hagop S. Andonian and the legal adviser of the US Embassy, Arshag K. Schmavonian.<sup>8</sup> As the Ambassador spoke no Turkish, French or Armenian, and did not travel outside of Istanbul, it can be suspected that their contributions have exceeded mere assistance.

The most significant omission made by Ms. Power is the well-documented massacre of defenceless Muslims (Turks, Kurds and other ethnic groups) by Armenians during the First World War. Mass graves of Muslims in Eastern Anatolia near towns such as Kars, Erzurum and Van, cities occupied by Armenian assisted Russian forces, are testimony of the carnage inflicted upon civilian populations by the alliance of Armenians and Russians.

As it is well known, in 1919, the British High Commission in Istanbul, utilizing Armenian informants, arrested 144 high Ottoman officials and deported them to the island of Malta to be out on trial on charges of a premeditated attempt to harm Armenians. While the deportees were interned in Malta, the British appointed an Armenian scholar Mr. Haig Khazarian, to conduct a thorough examination of the Ottoman, British<sup>9</sup> and the US archives<sup>10</sup> to substantiate the charges. Though he was granted complete access to all records, Khazarian's corps of investigators discovered no evidence to demonstrate that Ottoman officials had

<sup>7</sup> Lowry, W. Heath; "The Story Behind the Ambassador Morgenthau's Story," (Istanbul: The Isis Press, 1990), p. 40.

<sup>8</sup> Lowry, *ibid*, p. 14, 15.

<sup>9</sup> 29 July 1921; Foreign Office 371/6504/E8745: "The Charges made against the persons named in the Foreign Office list are of a quasi-political character, and are for this reason to be distinguished from those cases in which Turks have been held as prisoners of war on the advice of the Law Officers upon charges of cruelty to British Prisoners of War... Up to present no statements have been taken from witnesses who can depose to the truth of the charges made against the prisoners. It is indeed uncertain whether any witnesses can be found and it is hardly necessary to dwell upon the difficulty of finding witnesses in a country so remote and inaccessible as Armenia, especially after so long a lapse of time..."

<sup>10</sup> R. C. Craigie, British Embassy in Washington, to Lord Curzon, 13 July 1921; Foreign Office 371/6504/8519: "I regret to inform your lordship that there was nothing therein which could be used as evidence against the Turks who are at present being detained at Malta... No concrete facts being given which could constitute satisfactory incriminating evidence... The reports in question do not appear in any case to contain evidence against these Turks which would be useful even for the purpose of corroborating information already in the possession of His Majesty's Government..."



either sanctioned or encouraged the killing of Armenians. After two years and four months of detention without trial, the British Procurator General exonerated and released all 144 detainees.

The author indicates in her book that in 1919 the Ottoman Government set up a tribunal in Istanbul that convicted two senior district officials for crimes committed against the Armenians and she hence concludes that by this action Ottomans had accepted the veracity of the Armenian Genocide claim.<sup>11</sup> However, as she mentions in her book, there were 320,000 British soldiers in Istanbul who were exerting pressure on the Ottoman Sultan and the Government to come up with results. The impartiality of such a court must be called into question. Yet, even if the proceedings of this Court were to be accepted it must be noted for the record that those persons who did not take sufficient measures to save and assist Armenians during the relocation were convicted, but that the Court did not accept the allegation of a plan to murder Armenians.<sup>12</sup>

In conclusion, although the author has a legal background, she blatantly plays prosecutor, judge and jury without giving the defendant a right of defence. She sentences the Turkish side to the high crime of genocide by omitting any Turkish point of view or that of other scholars, who do not subscribe to the Armenian orthodoxy, as regurgitated by Power, on this controversial issue. If one is going to level the crime of "genocide" against a nation, this ought to be done not by reaching out to hand-picking "evidence" and "scholars" to prove a pre-accepted verdict, but by looking at all available evidence and scholarship with an open mind and deciding whether it supports such an accusation. The duty of a scholar is to find and preserve the truth. It should not be to help perpetuate hate by disseminating bias as fact and outright lies as truth.

<sup>11</sup> Power, *ibid*, p. 14.

<sup>12</sup> Genelkurmay ATASE Arşivi, K 212, D 231 (in Cemalettin Taskiran; "Türk Ermeni İlişkileri, Tehcir Olayı ve Sözde Soykırım," Hasan C. Güzel (ed.), *Osmanlı'dan Günümüze Ermeni Sorunu*, (Istanbul: Yeni Türkiye Yayınları, 2001), pp. 220, 221.

Book's Name: **SECRETS OF A "CHRISTIAN" TERRORIST STATE, ARMENIA**

Author: Samuel A. Weems, Retired State Attorney, Arkansas  
St. John Press

**Yüksel OKTAY**

Finally, there is a book that tells the true nature of the Republic of Armenia, a small country east of Turkey, which claims to be the first "Christian" state in the world, and the activities of Armenian-Americans which the author characterizes as the "Armenian Colony in America". All this year, the Armenians have been celebrating the so called 1,700th anniversary of Armenia's acceptance of Christianity as the state religion, even hosting the ailing Pope, using his holiness in the perpetuation of one of their stories. As the 382 page book reveals, the creation of Armenia goes back only to the early 1800s, mostly on other people's land given to them by the Russians, and told to the unsuspecting world in their made up stories. In fact, the book is subtitled "The Armenian Great Deception series - Volume 1" and the author promises more books to come that will reveal the 'truth' about this.

Samuel Weems is a former district attorney and judge from Hazen, Arkansas. He has a juris doctorate degree from the University of Arkansas School of Law. In the Preface, the author reflects on his experiences in Turkey, including on September 11, 2001, and tells about the great affection and sympathy that Turks have towards the Americans and wishes that other people would have been in Turkey on that tragic day to witness it for themselves. Then he goes to the heart of the matter and states that he has uncovered facts that prove Armenian-Americans are spreading tall tales claiming a massacre and genocide in an effort to get mega-dollars out of both the Turks and American Christians to benefit their 150 year old "ancient" homeland.

The Turks and many scholars and historians have been telling the world that there was never a genocide against the Armenians ever since the Armenians started their smear campaign, which so far has fallen on deaf ears. Now the brilliantly told facts in Sam Weem's book should be an eye opener to the supporters of the so-called Armenian genocide. In the Preface, the author also gives details of the hate campaign directed towards him by the Armenian-American organizations and individuals since the

announcement of his book and lists other prominent Americans who have been the target as well, including Prof. Stanford Shaw, Prof. Heath Lowry, Prof. Justin McCarthy and film maker Robin Williams, who have had the courage to tell the truth.. What a shame, Americans against Americans.

In the Introduction, the author questions the beginnings of Armenia, and states that it was not until 1820 when the Czarist Russia attempted to expand its empire that the Armenians appeared on the world scene and started atrocities for creating a Greater Armenia in eastern Anatolia through terror and forced removal of the Muslim populations that came under their control. The Russians were the biggest enemy of the Turks for centuries starting many wars with the Ottomans and later, became the enemy of the Armenians as well, which is well documented in a story by one of the great Armenian-American authors from Fresno California, William Saroyan, called "Antranik of Armenia". This should be a must read for everyone after Sam's book to know what an Armenian whose parents migrated to the United States from Bitlis, Turkey has been telling the world about the Armenians, the Turks and the Russians.

The Holy terror of the Armenian Gregorian or Orthodox Church acting together with the state is chronicled throughout the book starting with Chapter 1, which also reveals the role of the Christian Missionaries in Anatolia beginning in the mid 1850's. The author even refers to statements made by Reverend Cyrus Hamlin, the founder of the Roberts College in Istanbul, and also the support given by Dr. George E. White, the President of Anatolia College in Merzifon, appearing before the King-Crane Commission in 1920 for the establishment of American Mandate over the remaining Ottoman lands after the First World War.

Throughout the book, the author presents excerpts from Professor Richard G. Hovannissian's four volume book "The Republic of Armenia" and challenges the validity of his statements. In chapter thirteen, the author tells how paid Armenian Agents molded public opinion in the United States and describes the activities of several commissions that were setup by the

US Government to look into the developments and the conditions in Turkey, such as the American Military Mission to Armenia, headed by James G. Harbord in 1919 and the King-Crane Commission in 1920. A wealth of information is provided

throughout the book about the findings of these commissions and also the false reports of Ambassador Henry Morgenthau .

One can easily understand why the United States Government did not recognize the Turkish Grand National Assembly which was established in April 1920 until 1927. There are also statements made by Admiral Bristol contradicting the findings of Henry Morgenthau, which is usually absent in books sympathetic to the Armenians..

In the final Chapter 21, the author writes about Armenia in today's world, the Karabakh problem, the establishment of a Turkish-Armenian Commission for Reconciliation and presents his 12 point suggestions that should be considered before the Turks can consider Armenian demands.

There are a small number of shortcomings of the book which I am sure the author will remedy with the next edition, such as including an index and a list of selected references and correcting several minor errors. As stated in the back cover, this book is a must-read for everyone who is interested in the establishment of good relations between the two neighbors following the motto of one of the greatest leaders of the twentieth century, Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, who the author speaks of with great admiration and respect throughout the book, "Peace at Home, Peace in the World".

## RECENT BOOKS

Assist. Prof. Dr. Sedat LAÇINER\*

### **Recent Turkish and English Publications on Armenia, Armenian Issue and Caucasian Politics**

#### **2023 Dergisi / Journal of 2023.**

Nisan, Ermeni Sorunu Özel Sayısı (April, Armenian Problem Special Issue, in Turkish), 15 Nisan – April 2002, No. 12.

#### **Some of the articles:**

Yaşar KALAFAT and Mahmut Niyazi SEZGİN, **“Albanlar Tarihi Ve Ermeni Kültür Stratejisi”** (*The Albanians, History and the Armenian Cultural Strategy*), pp. 16-25.  
Interview with Ömer E. LÜTEM, the Head of the Institute for Armenian Research:  
**“Ermenistan Şunun Farkında Değil: Bir Ülkenin Toprak Bütünlüğünü Tanımazsanız, O Ülke İle Diplomatik İlişki Kuramazsınız”** (*Armenia Must Know That If You Do not Recognize a Country's Territorial Integrity, You Cannot*

*Establish Diplomatic Relations With That Country*), pp. 26-29.  
Cemalettin TAŞKIRAN, **“Karabağ Meselesi”** (*The Karabkh Issue*), pp. 36-41.  
Kamer KASIM, **“Diasporanın Ermenistan Dış Politikasına Etkisi”** (*The Impact of the Armenian Diaspora On Armenian Foreign Policy*), pp. 42-46.  
Şenol KANTARCI, **“Amerikalı Misyonerlerin Osmanlı Topraklarındaki Faaliyetleri”** (*The Activities of the American Missionaries in the Ottoman Territories*), pp. 48-54.  
Sedat LAÇINER, **“Ermeni Kimlik Bunalımı Ve Güç Politikalarının Bir Ürünü Olarak Ermeni Sorunu”** (*The Armenian Problem As A Result Of The Armenian Identity Crises And The Power Politics*), pp. 56-61.  
İbrahim KAYA, **“Ermenilerin Yahudi Soykırımıyla Benzerlik Kurma Stratejisi”** (*The Armenian Strategy To Make Parallels With The Jewish*

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*Holocaust*), pp. 62-65.  
 Hatem HALFEOĞLU, "Rusya'da Ermeni Diasporası Oluşumu Ve Faaliyetleri" (*The Armenian Diaspora in Russia, Evolution and Activities*), pp. 66-75.

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**Armenian Question, Allegations And Facts.**  
 Biltek Press, forthcoming (in English).

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**Atatürk ve Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Konusunda Yurtdışında Yayınlanmış Kitaplar Bibliyografyası / Atatürk and the Turkish Republic: Bibliography of Books Published Abroad.**  
 Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi.  
 Ankara: Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi, 2000. 885 pages.  
 Index.

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**Asılsız Ermeni İddiaları Ve Ermenilerin Türklere Yaptıkları Mezâlim.**  
*(Unfounded Armenian Allegations And The Atrocities That Had Been Perpetrated Towards The Turks By The Armenians, in Turkish)*  
 İsmet BİNARK. Ankara: Ankara Ticaret Odası Yayını, No. 16, Nisan 2001. 328 sayfa / pages, ciltli / hardback + fotoğraflar + arşiv belgeleri.  
 ISBN: 975-512-535-3.  
 Tel: 0090 312 417 42 61 or 417 63 93.

**Archive Documents About The Atrocities And Genocide Inflicted Upon Turks By Armenians.**

İsmet BİNARK. Ankara: Board of Culture, Arts and Publications, Grand National Assembly of Turkey, No. 93, 2002. 156 pages + photos + archive documents.  
 ISBN : 975-7479-85-3.

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**Unfounded Armenian Allegations And The Atrocities That Had Been Perpetrated Towards The Turks By The Armenians.**  
 İsmet BİNARK. Ankara: Publication of the Ankara Chamber of Commerce, No: 16, March 2002. 332 pages, hardback + photos + archive documents.  
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# DOCUMENTS

## TURKISH CONGRESS ON ARMENIAN RESEARCH PROGRAM 20 APRIL 2002

### SESSION I

ROOM A

CHAIR: PROF. MEHMET SARAY

RTD. AMBASSADOR KAMURAN GÜRÜN: BRITISH BLUE BOOK  
AND OTTOMAN COURT MARTIAL

PROF. KEMALETTİN YİĞİTER: ARMENIAN QUESTION IN  
"BLEEDING ARMENIA UNDER THE CURSE OF ISLAM" BY GABRIEL  
AND WILLIAMS AND HISTORICAL FACTS

ASSOC. PROF. SELAMI KILIÇ: ARMENIAN QUESTION: ACCUSING  
GERMANY AND HER POLICY OF CLEARING HER NAME

ASSIST. PROF. MUAMMER DEMIREL: THE TERMINOLOGY WITH  
REGARD TO THE TURKS AND ARMENIANS IN THE BRITISH  
DOCUMENTS

ASSIST. PROF. RAMAZAN ÇALIK: THE APPROACH OF THE  
GERMANS TO THE ARMENIAN INCIDENTS

MEHMET PERİNCEK: THE SOVIET ARCHIVES CONFIRM TURKISH  
THESIS

HATEM CABBARLI: ARMENIAN QUESTION IN "BATTLE OF A  
CENTURY" BY EDWARD AGANISYAN

ROOM B

CHAIR: PROF. SALİM ÇÖHÇE

PROF. MUNİR ATALAR: REJECTION TO THE ARMENIAN  
GENOCIDE

ASSOC. PROF. TİMUÇİN ERTAN: THE LEVEL OF KNOWLEDGE

AND CONSCIOUS OF THE HIGHER EDUCATION STUDENTS IN  
TURKEY ON THE ARMENIAN QUESTION

ASSOC. PROF. SULEYMAN BEYOGLU: AN OVERVIEW OF  
ARMENIAN STUDIES

ASSIST. PROF. NECDET BILGI: THE PROBLEMS OF TURKEY  
REGARDING LEARNING AND INFORMING ABOUT THE ARMENIAN  
QUESTION

DR. SAİT AŞGIN: SO-CALLED ARMENIAN GENOCIDE CLAIMS  
AND HISTORICAL FACTS

ŞENER AKSU: PROBLEMS OF APPROACH TO THE ARMENIAN  
QUESTION

ROOM C

CHAIR: AMBASSADOR (R) PULAT TACAR

ASSIST. PROF. ERDAL AÇIKSES: THE ROLE OF MIGRATION ON  
THE ARMENIAN QUESTION

ASSIST. PROF. ATILLA ŞEHİRLİ: RELOCATION OF ARMENIANS

ASSIST. PROF. BAYRAM AKÇA: 1915 ARMENIAN RELOCATION  
AND EXECUTION OF THE GOVERNOR OF URFA NUSRET BEY

ASSIST. PROF. HASAN BABACAN: AN ESSAY ON TALAT PASHA  
AND THE ARMENIAN RELOCATION

ASSIST. PROF. İBRAHİM ETHEM ATNUR: ARMENIAN QUESTION IN  
1918

ASSIST. PROF. NURCAN TOKSOY: TURKISH-ARMENIAN  
RELATIONS (1914-18)

## **SESSION II**

ROOM A

CHAIR: AMBASSADOR (R) KAMURAN GÜRÜN

PROF. GÜL AKYILMAZ: THE LEGAL STATUS OF THE NON-  
MUSLIMS IN THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE

PROF. ALİ ŞAFAK: RULES CONCERNING THE ELECTION OF  
ARMENIAN PATRIARCH IN İSTANBUL AND ITS ASSESSMENT FROM  
THE POINT OF LAW

SUGGESTIONS FOR THE SOLUTION OF THE INTERNATIONAL TENSION CREATED BY THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE CLAIMS

ASSIST. PROF. İBRAHİM KAYA: GENOCIDE IN INTERNATIONAL LAW

KAZİM BERZEG: ARMENİANS FROM THE POINT OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND PROPERTY LAW

CEZMİ YURTSEVER: ARMENIAN CLAIMS TO TERRITORY AND COMPENSATION: HACERYAN CASE IN ADANA

ROOM B

CHAIR: PROF. ENVER KONUKÇU

PROF. SEÇİL KARAL AKGÜN: SOME IMPORTANT DOCUMENTS SHEDDING LIGHT ON THE ARMENIAN QUESTION

ASSIST. PROF. SABİT DUMAN: THE MODIFICATION OF THE RELOCATION TO "GENOCIDE" IN THE US PRESS

DR. YÜCEL AKTAR: DOCUMENTS REFUTE THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE CLAIMS

DR. BEKİR GÜNAY: ARMENİANS IN AND AROUND İZMİT BETWEEN 1914-20 IN THE DOCUMENTS OF THE MINISTRY OF INTERIOR

ASSOC. PROF. YUSUF SARINAY: ARMENIAN QUESTION AND TURKISH ARCHIVES

ERDAL AYDOĞAN: INSTRUCTIONS REGARDING THE ARMENIAN RELOCATION

ROOM C

CHAIR: PROF. CEMALETTİN TAŞKIRAN

PROF. DR. FİKRET TÜRKMEN: TURKISH-ARMENIAN CULTURAL RELATIONS

ASSOC. PROF. KENAN ZİYA TAŞ: CLAIMS ON ARMENIAN-KURDISH ETHNIC IDENTITY

ASSIST. PROF. TURGAY UZUN: SOCIAL STRUCTURE IN THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE AND ARMENIAN ACTIVITY

DR. YAŞAR KALAFAT/MAHMUT SEZGİN: STRATEGICAL DIMENSION OF THE ARMENIAN-ALBANIAN RELATIONS

KAMIL B. RAIF: ARMENIAN ISSUE FROM THE POINT OF SOCIO-CULTURE

**SESSION III**

ROOM A

CHAIR: PROF. ARSLAN TERZIOGLU

ASSIST. PROF. KAMER KASIM: FOREIGN POLICY OF ARMENIA: SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES BETWEEN TER-PETROSYAN AND KOCARIAN ADMINISTRATIONS

PROF. DR. CEMALETTİN TAŞKIRAN: WHAT IS ARMENIAN DIASPORA AND WHAT DOES IT WANT?

ASSIST. PROF. SEDAT LAÇİNER: IDENTITY CRISIS IN THE ARMENIAN DIASPORA AND ITS IMPLICATION ON THE ARMENIAN QUESTION

ASSOC. PROF. ALAEDDİN YALÇINKAYA: ARMENIAN SHOULD TAKE PART IN THE CASPIAN-BLACK SEA ENERGY SYSTEM

DR. NAZMİ ÜSTE: ARMENIA AND TURKEY IN THE LIGHT OF THE POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS AFTER SEPTEMBER 11

AYDAN İYİGUNGOR: ARMENIA-ISRAEL RELATIONS

ROOM B

CHAIR: PROF. BAYRAM KODAMAN

PROF. AHMET ARSLAN/RUHİ ERSOY: THE SILENCE OF PICTURES

ASSOC. PROF. AHMET EYİCİL: THE MASSACRE OF TURKS IN MARASH BY ARMENIANS IN COOPERATION WITH THE FRENCH

ASSOC. PROF. EBULFEZ AMANOGLU: ARMENIAN OPPRESSION IN THE NAHCIVAN AUTONOMOUS REPUBLIC (1917-20) AND RESCUING ACTIVITIES OF THE TURKISH ARMY

İSMET BİNARK: ARMENIAN MASSACRE AND GENOCIDE IN THE LIGHT OF FOREIGN AND TURKISH ARCHIVES

ASSIST. PROF. GÜRSOY SOLMAZ: THE REMAININGS OF MASSACRES BY ARMENIANS IN SARIKAMIS AND ITS SURROUNDINGS

ASSIST. PROF. YUSUF. ZİYA BİLDİRİCİ: 1919-20 ADANA MASSACRES BY THE ARMENIANS

ASSIST. PROF. SERPİL SÜRMEĠ: THE ASSESSMENT OF THE BRITISH POLITICAL VIEW ON THE I. SASUN INSURGENCY AND FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS

ASSIST. PROF. İBRAHİM AYKUN: ARMENIAN HUNCHAK ORGANIZATION IN TOKAT AND ITS ACTIVITIES (1893-94)

ROOM C

CHAIR: PROF. DR. ZEKİ ARIKAN

PROF. DR. NURİ BİLGİN: GENOCIDE CLAIMS FROM THE POINT OF SOCIAL SYMBOLS AND RECONSTRUCTION OF HISTORY

PROF. DR. ZEKİ ARIKAN: TURKISH-ARMENIAN CULTURAL RELATIONS: EĞİN CASE

ASSOC. PROF. AHMET KANKAL: ARMENIANS IN THE OTTOMAN-TURKISH SOCIETY ACCORDING TO ARMENIAN STORIES

ASSOC. PROF. ZEYNEL ABİDİN MAKAS: THE ARMENIAN POINT OF VIEW TO TURKISH FOLK STORIES

ASSIST. PROF. MEHMET KUTALMIŞ: THE PLACE OF ARMENIAN AND TURKISH LANGUAGES IN ARMENIAN ALPHABET WORKS IN THE TURKISH-ARMENIAN RELATIONSHIP

ASSOC. PROF. BİRSEN KARACA: ONE OF THE THREE TABOOS OF THE ARMENIAN CULTURE: ARMENIAN LANGUAGE

**21 APRIL 2002**

**SESSION IV**

ROOM A

CHAIR: PROF. GÜL AKYILMAZ

ASSOC. PROF. ESAT ARSLAN: RECRUITMENT OF THE NON-MUSLIMS IN THE OTTOMAN ARMY: A CASE OF AN OTTOMAN ARMENIAN OFFICER RECRUITED IN NAVY ON CONTRACT

DR. SÜLEYMAN KIZILTOPRAK: VIZIER NUBAR PASHA OF EGYPT (1824-99)

DR. ALİYAR DEMİRCİ: ARMENIAN MEMBERS OF THE OTTOMAN SENATE AND THEIR ACTIVITIES IN THE FIRST AND SECOND LEGISLATION PERIODS OF THE SECOND CONSTITUTIONAL MONARCHY (1908-12)

ROOM B

CHAIR: PROF. NURİ KÖSTÜKLÜ

ASSOC. PROF. MEHMET ERSAN: ARMENIAN ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE TURKS IN THE PERIOD OF THE CONQUEST OF ANATOLIA AND SELCUK TURKS

ASSIST. PROF.EROL KÜRKÇÜOĞLU: ARMENIAN AND SELCUKIS RELATIONS IN HISTORY

ASSIST. PROF. AHMET TOKSOY: ALP ARSLAN AND MELİKŞAH IN THE WRITINGS OF THE ARMENIAN HISTORIAN MATEOS

ROOM C

CHAIR: PROF. DR. NURİ BİLGİN

ASSOC. PROF. ALİ ASLAN OTTOMAN AND ARMENIAN ECHMIADZIN CHURCH RELATIONS PRIOR TO THE SECOND CONSTITUTIONAL MONARCHY

CANAN SEYFELİ: THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE ISTANBUL ARMENIAN PATRIARCHATE

RECEP KARACAKAYA: THE ISTANBUL ARMENIAN PATRIARCH ÖTEOS

ASSOC. PROF. HALİL BAL: THE AGGRESSIVE ATTITUDE OF THE ARMENIAN GOVERNMENT AGAINST THE TURKS IN THE SOUTHERN CAUCASUS

**SESSION V**

ROOM A

CHAIR: DR. BİLAL ŞİMŞİR

AMBASSADOR (R) ÖMER ENGİN LÜTEM: THE ARMENIA POLICY OF TURKEY AND TURKEY POLICY OF ARMENIA

AMBASSADOR (R) ALİ HİKMET ALP: THE PROBLEM OF ARMENIA IN THE SOUTHERN CAUCASUS

AMBASSADOR (R) YÜKSEL SÖYLEMEZ: TURKEY, AZERBAIJAN AND ARMENIA: A TRIPARTITE COMMUNICATION

PROF. AYDIN İBRAHİMOV: KARABAGH QUESTION: CHANGE IN TIME AND PLACE

ASSOC. PROF. EROL GÖKA: THE PSYCHOLOGY OF ARMENIAN  
DIASPORA

ŞENOL KANTARCI: THE EXAMINATION OF THE HISTORICAL  
FACTS IN THE FILM ARARAT BY ATOM EGOYAN

DR. ŞEFİKA HÜSEYİN: KARABAGH AND ARMENIANS

ROOM B

CHAIR: PROF. ZEKİ ARIKAN

PROF. SALİM ÇÖHÇE: ATTEMPTS OF POLITICIZATION IN THE  
OTTOMAN ARMENIAN COMMUNITY

ASSOC. PROF. H. TAHSİN FENDOĞLU: THE ROLE OF THE  
AMERICAN MISSIONARIES IN THE RISE OF THE ARMENIAN  
QUESTION

ASSOC. PROF. İSMİHAN YUSUBOV: THE PLACE OF THE  
"ARMENIAN QUESTION" IN THE POLICY OF THE EMPIRES: CAUSES  
AND RESULTS

ASSOC. PROF. ORHAN KILIÇ: WERE THE ARMENIANS  
MASSACRED IN HARPUT?

ASSIST. PROF. İLKNUR H. POLAT: ARMENIAN AND AMERICAN-  
ARMENIAN SCHOOLS THAT BROKE OFF ARMENIANS FROM THE  
OTTOMANS

ASSIST. PROF. HALUK SELVİ: ARMENIAN ACTIVITIES IN THE  
UNITED STATES 1892-1896

KAZIM ÇELİK: ARMENIAN QUESTION AND SOVEREIGNTY RIGHTS

## **SESSION VI**

ROOM A

CHAIR: AMBASSADOR (R) ALİ HİKMET ALP

PROF. ARSLAN TERZİOĞLU: THE MURDER OF TALAT PASHA IN  
BERLIN IN 15 MARCH 1921 IN THE LETTERS AND WRITINGS OF  
THE LEADERS OF THE COMMITTEE OF UNION AND PROGRESS

PROF. MEHMET SARAY: ARMENIAN TERRORISM

AMBASSADOR (R) DR. BİLAL ŞİMŞİR: ARMENIAN TERRORISM  
AND MARTYR TURKISH DIPLOMATS



ASSIST. PROF. HAMİT PEHLİVANLI: ARMENIAN TERRORISM: THE ROAD LEADING TO RELOCATION

ASSIST. PROF. GALİP ALÇİTEPE: TURKISH PUBLIC OPINION REGARDING THE FIRST FIVE ASSASSINATIONS

YAVUZ CANKARA: ASALA TERROR ORGANIZATION AND ARMENIAN TERRORISM

SONER KARAGÜL: ARMENIAN TERRORISM AND ITS POLITICIZATION

ROOM B

CHAIR: AMBASSADOR (R) YÜKSEL SÖYLEMEZ

PROF. DR. BAYRAM KODAMAN: ARMENIAN POPULATION IN THE PROVINCES OF ERZURUM-VAN-SIVAS ACCORDING TO THE FRENCH ARCHIVAL DOCUMENTS

PROF. DR. ENVER KONUKÇU: THE ANI RUINS

ASSOC. PROF. ENVER TÖRE: ARMENIAN REVOLT IN YUKARIŞEHİR

ASSIST. PROF. CELAL PEKDOĞAN: TURKISH-ARMENIAN RELATIONS IN GAZİANTEP

DR. HASAN OKTAY: ARMENIANS AND VAN REVOLUTIONARY ORGANIZATION (1896-1915)

KEMALETTİN KUZUCU: ARMENIANS ACTIVITIES IN SIVAS AND MEASURES OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT

ROOM C

CHAIR: PROF. KEMALETTİN YİĞİTER

ASSOC. PROF. MUSTAFA MUTLUER: NEW PROBLEMS AND APPROACHES IN THE TURKEY-ARMENIA RELATIONS

ASSIST. PROF. DAVUT KILIÇ: ARMENIANS NOT RELOCATED IN 1915

ASSIST. PROF. ALİ KARACA: TWO NEGLECTED POINTS ON THE WAY TO ARMENIAN RELOCATION

ASSIST. PROF. MEHMET ÇEVİK: OTTOMAN POLICY ON THE RETURN OF ARMENIANS AFTER THE RELOCATION

ASSIST. PROF. TUNCAY ÖGÜN: IS THE VAN REVOLT THE CAUSE OR RESULT OF THE ARMENIAN RELOCATION?

SERVET AVŞAR: DISSENTING OPINION OF THE MEMBER OF COURT MARTIAL, COL. SÜLEYMAN ŞAKİR IN THE TRIAL OF THE MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE OF UNION AND PROGRESS FOR THE ARMENIAN RELOCATION.

ASSIST. PROF. MUHAMMET ERAT: THE ATTITUDE OF THE BRITISH OFFICER RAWLINSON REGARDING ARMENIAN QUESTION (1919-22)

## **SESSION VII**

### **ROOM A**

CHAIR: PROF. FIKRET TURKMEN

ASSOC. PROF. NURŞEN MAZICI: ARMENIANS IN THE TURKISH REPUBLIC

ASSIST. PROF. BÜLENT ÇUKUROVA: SOCIO-ECONOMICAL FACTORS IN THE MIGRATION OF ARMENIANS FROM ANTEP TO SYRIA IN 1922

ASSIST. PROF. AHMET FARUK KILIÇ: ATATURK AND THE ARMENIAN QUESTION IN THE FRAMEWORK OF MINORITIES PROBLEM

ASSIST. PROF. HUSEYİN KOCA: AN OVERVIEW TO ARMENIAN ACTIVITIES TOWARDS EASTERN AND SOUTHEASTERN ANATOLIA IN THE GENERAL INSPECTORATES' REPORTS OF THE SINGLE PARTY ERA

CAFER ULU: ARMENIANS IN THE THOUGHTS AND OPINIONS OF THE MUSTAFA KEMAL ATATURK

SADETTİN BASTURK: ON THE ARMENIANS AT THE LAUSANNE PEACE CONFERENCE

### **ROOM B**

CHAIR: PROF. MUNİR ATALAR

PROF. NURİ KÖSTÜKLÜ: ARMENIAN-GREEK ACTIVITIES AGAINST THE NATIONAL STRUGGLE IN THE WESTERN FRONT

ASSOC. PROF. CEZMİ ERASLAN: ARMENIAN POLICY OF THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE FROM THE SECOND CONSTITUTIONAL PERIOD TO THE RELOCATION

YAŞAR KOP: ARMENIANS IN THE RUSSO-OTTOMAN WAR OF  
1828-9

**SESSION VIII**

ROOM A

CHAIR: AMBASSADOR (R) ÖMER ENGİN LÜTEM

FINAL DECLARATION OF THE CONGRESS

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**TURKISH CONGRESS ON ARMENIAN RESEARCH DECLARATION**

**20-21 April 2002, Ankara**

Turkish Congress on Armenian Research that aims at getting all Turkish scholars engaged in the field of Armenian research together, increasing scientific interest in Armenian research, providing a ground of dialogue between Turkish and Armenian peoples based on tolerance and common sense, and in the face of the recent developments revealing the common attitude of the Turkish scholars to the Turkish, Armenian and world public opinions, has been held on April 20-21, 2002 in Ankara. Turkish Congress on Armenian Research, realized thanks to the initiatives of Institute for Armenian Research and participation of a great number of scholars and authors, presented an opportunity for analysis of Turkish-Armenian relations from current and historical perspectives and scientific study of "genocide" claims.

Submitted presentations and other delivered speeches made it clear that the Armenian claims are mostly based on the distorted documents, that the documents expressing and serious researches are disregarded or are misinterpreted to support prejudices, that unscientific methods are resorted to generalize the individual opinions belonging to just one of the sides.

Despite all the negative responses received so far, Turkish scholars and intellectuals believe that to help to resolve a problem stemming from the distortion of a historical event, Turkish and Armenian scholars should come together to discuss the subject considering all its aspects. The participants of the congress called on their Armenian colleagues for such a dialogue.

In the congress where legal aspects of the subject have been

taken up as well, it was made clear that the scientific researches conducted so far show that "genocide" cannot be talked about, and every clash in history however great it may be, cannot be called "genocide". Moreover, in the Congress it was determined that the 1915 relocation needs to be evaluated within the context of the historical conditions of the age, by no means fits the legal definition of the 1948 United Nations' Convention, that whether such an act was committed or not can only be determined by competent courts, and that according to the Treaty, the mentioned act can be committed not by institutions and states but rather by individuals. In addition to this, the Congress vehemently condemns the murder of a great number of civilian Turks by armed Armenian groups, and calls not to overlook the Turkish victims.

In spite of the scientific data to the contrary, the use of "genocide" claims against Turkey as a tool of propaganda by some Armenian groups, some circles supporting them and by the government of Armenia in recent years, can only be explained by political reasons. Moreover, that the mentioned circles get such claims recognized by foreign institutions and parliaments, which are not qualified to judge historical events is also based upon political reasons. The analyses laid bare that, among the reasons behind Armenia's policy of creating artificial tension with Turkey, is the endeavor to create a justification for continued occupation of Azerbaijani territories despite UN resolutions, and that such a stand not only endangers long-term interests of Armenia but also peace and stability in the Caucasus. In addition to all these, that Armenia insistently disrespects the borders of the neighboring states, and explicitly doesn't recognize the Turkish-Armenian border that is enshrined in written treaties, are the greatest obstacles in front of the lasting relationship between Turkey and this state. Armenia should immediately abandon its attitude for the sake of its own interests and regional peace.

Extremist Armenian groups' setting forth the recognition of "genocide" claims as a precondition for a dialogue, and their refusal to analyze the issue in relevant organizations that would handle it with all its aspects, allowing both sides to express their views, is far from being scientific and constructive. This attitude shows the lack of confidence of these circles to their thesis. The claims of this kind, besides running counter to all the values that are tried to mark 21st century, encourages resentment, hatred and

a racist terrorism; that such an approach is overlooked carries a great deal of drawbacks. The congress has condemned all the initiatives that utilize "genocide" claims for political ends and accept such claims unilaterally.

All the participants strongly condemned Armenian terrorism that resulted in the murder of innocent Turkish diplomats, other Turkish citizens and citizens of other countries. The Congress calls on all the states of the world to put the Armenian terrorist organizations on their terrorist lists.

The congress considered studies that needs to be conducted to put forward historical truth against the claims in question.

The extremist campaigns couldn't be responded to with the same intensity. This situation results in that people, who didn't have enough information on the issue, accept to most repeated allegations as truth. First of all, scientific studies showing that the allegations have no reliable basis should be conducted continuously. This amounts to a historical duty and responsibility for the Turkish scholars.

Archive researches that constitute the basis for scientific studies is of vital importance. The majority of the documents about Armenians and Armenian question are in the Turkish archives. For this reason, valuable activities of the Turkish General Directorate of Archives should be strongly supported to offer the required documents easily to the scholars making the historical truths come to the fore. For the first-hand analysis of the Russian and Armenian archives, the training of scholars competent in these languages should be accelerated. Moreover, the participants of the Congress called for the immediate opening of other states' archives, first of all the Armenian ones, related to the issue.

To be sure, to continue studies on the historical aspects of the subject needs to be carried out. Yet mere historical approach is not enough. The current aspects of the subject shouldn't be disregarded besides its historical ones. In this context, to complete existing studies with other studies on international relations, political science and sociology, scholars should be encouraged and supported.

To respond to the campaign we face today, it's equally important that scientific researches are widely known. The researches may be conducted in foreign languages or, those in

Turkish should be translated to foreign languages, most notably to English, and disseminated. In this endeavor new means of communication like Internet shouldn't be neglected.

The Congress considering the issue of encouraging and facilitating scientific researches in the country as well, finds it relevant to put forward the practical advises below:

1. Official institutions are expected to participate in these efforts within the limits of their capacities and even include them in their activities in a programmed way,
2. Private organizations are expected to support such activities and to contribute necessary donations,
3. To secure continuity and intensity in encouraging scientific researches in the country it would be useful that the Council of High Education acquire a central function would be useful. The council might fulfill its job by granting research scholarships, awarding serious scientific studies, providing coordination and other means,
4. A "Scientific Council" established under the chairmanship of the Council of Higher Education might help in coordinating and evaluating such studies.

All the participants of the congress, convinced of the benefits of discussing freely the topics together, wish that the Congress be convened in two years time at most, and present their appreciation and gratitude to the Institute for Armenian Research for its valuable initiative.

**THE 81. ANNIVERSARY OF TALAT PASHA'S ASSASINATION: A  
LOOK ON INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM**

**15 March 2002**

**ISTANBUL – Pera Palas**

Program

09:00	Opening Speech:	
	Minister of Culture Istemihan Talay	
<b>1. Section</b>		
<b>Chairman:</b>	Ömer Lütem	
09.15-09.45	Seçil Akgün	First Armenian Terrorist Incidents
09.45-10.15	Arslan Terzioğlu	The Assassination of Talat Pasha and Bahaddin Shakir in Berlin and the Armenian Relocation
10.15-10.45	Kallerya Bellova	The Assassination of Cemal Pasha in Tiflis
10.45-11.15	Discussion	
11.15-11.30	Break	
<b>2. Section</b>		
<b>Chairman:</b>	Arslan Terzioğlu	
11.30-12.00	Erich Feigl	Talat Pasha: The Slandering of a statesman by Franz Werfel
12.00-12.30	Otto Winkelmann	"The Armenian Question" in the Memoirs of Ernst von Düring Pasha (1858-1944)
12.30-13.00	Samuel Weems	Armenian Terrorism in the USA
13.00-13.30	Discussion	
13.30-14.30	Lunch Break	

**3. Section**

<b>Chairman:</b>	Seçil Akgün	
14.30-15.00	Bilal Şimşir	Diplomat Victims of Armenian Terrorism
15.00-15.30	Ömer Lütem	Armenian Terrorism and the Aftermath
15.30-16.00	Nesib Nessibli	The Karabakh Conflict and Armenian Terrorism
16.00-16.30	Discussion	
16.30-16.45	Break	

**4. Section**

<b>Chairman:</b>	Bilal Şimşir	
16.45-17.15	Peter Bendixen	The Prevention of Terrorism by Cultural Exchange
17.15-17.45	Mehmet Saray	How can the Problems of the Turkish Armenian Relations be solved?
17.45-18.15	Discussion	
18.15	End	



# INDEX

**The Full List of the Turkish and English Articles in the  
first volume (number 1 to 4) of the journal  
Ermeni Arařtırmaları / Armenian Studies**

**Edited by Dr. Sedat LAÇINER\***

## **A. ENGLISH SECTION**

### **1. Articles**

ALP, Ali Hikmet, *Today's Armenia and Motives Behind The Genocide Accusations: More Than A Matter Of 'National Identity'*, Vol. 1, No. 2, June-July-August 2001, pp. 145-158.

ELEKDAĞ, Şükrü, *The Armenian Question*, Vol. 1, No. 1, March-April-May 2001, pp. 70-84.

EDITOR, *Editorial Note*, Vol. 1, No. 2, June-July-August 2001, pp. 7-8.

EDITOR, *Editorial Note*, Vol. 1, No. 4, December 2001-January-February 2002, pp. 221-223.

FEIGL, Erich, *Franz Werfel and "The Forty Days of Musa Dagh": A Bestseller Serves As a Fake Bible*, Vol. 1, No. 4, December 2001-January-February 2002, pp. 243-255.

IYİGÜNGÖR, Aydan, *The Profile Of The Armenian Diaspora In Germany*, Vol. 1, No. 3, September-October, November 2001, pp. 258-273.

IYİGÜNGÖR, Aydan, *A New Perspective: Armenian Allegations In The Light Of Israel And The Jews*, Vol. 1, No. 4, December 2001-January-February 2002, pp. 336-350.

KANBOLAT, Hasan and Nazmi GÜL, *The Geopolitics And Quest For Autonomy Of The Armenians Of Javekheti (Georgia) And Krasnodar (Russia) In The Caucasus*, Vol. 1, No. 2, June-July-August 2001, pp.186-210.

\* Assist Prof. Dr., Senior Researcher, Institute for Armenian Research (Ankara) and lecturer at Çanakkale Onsekiz March University, department of International Relations. E-mail: slaciner@eraren.org.

KASIM, Kamer, *The Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict From Its Inception To The Peace Process*, Vol. 1, No. 2, June-July-August 2001, pp. 170-185.

KASIM, Kamer, *Armenian Community In Australia*, Vol. 1, No. 3, September-October, November 2001, pp. 305-319.

KASIM, Kamer, *Turkish - Armenian Reconciliation Commission: A Missed Opportunity*, Vol. 1, No. 4, December 2001-January-February 2002, pp. 256-273.

KAYA, Ibrahim, *The Holocaust and Armenian Case: Highlighting The Main Differences*, Vol. 1, No. 4, December 2001-January-February 2002, pp. 274-295.

KÖNİ, Hasan, *The Research Of Arnold Toynbee On Turks And The Birth Of Armenian Propaganda*, Vol. 1, No. 2, June-July-August 2001, pp. 159-169.

LAÇİNER, Sedat, *Armenian Diaspora in Britain And The Armenian Question*, Vol. 1, No. 3, September-October, November 2001, pp. 233-257.

LAÇİNER, Sedat, *Armenia's Jewish Scepticism And Its Impact On Armenia - Israel Relations*, Vol. 1, No. 4, December 2001-January-February 2002, pp. 296-335.

LÜTEM, Ömer E., *Facts And Comments*, Vol. 1, No. 3, September-October, November 2001, pp. 209-232.

LÜTEM, Ömer E., *Facts and Comments*, Vol. 1, No. 4, December 2001-January-February 2002, pp. 224-242.

MCCARTHY, Justin, *Let the Historians Decide*, Vol. 1, No. 1, March-April-May 2001, pp. 48-65.

TERZİOĞLU, Arslan, *The Assasination of Dr. Bhaddin Sakir in Berlin and the Armenian Relocaion in Line With National and Foreign Sources of Information*, Vol. 1, No. 3, September-October, November 2001, pp. 274-304.

## 2. English Summaries of the Turkish Articles

CABBARLI, Hatem, *Armenian Diaspora In Russia: Its Emergence And Activities*, Vol. 1, No. 3, September-October, November 2001, pp. 340-342.

CABBARLI, Hatem, *The Azerbaijani Turks of Armenia: From Past To Present*, Vol. 1, No. 4, December 2001-January-February 2002, pp. 368-370.

ÇÖHÇE, Salim, *The Project of Establishing Great Armenia*, Vol. 1, No. 1, March-April-May 2001, pp. 106-107.

FEIGL, Erich, *The Victory And Tragedy Of The Armenian National Church*, Vol. 1, No. 2, June-July-August 2001, pp. 223-224.

GÖKA, Erol, *The Psychological Dimension of the Armenian Problem (The Unnoticed Side)*, Vol. 1, No. 1, March-April-May 2001, pp. 137-138.

ILTER, Erdal, *The Armenian Diaspora In Lebanon*, Vol. 1, No. 3, September-October, November 2001, pp. 338-339.

KANTARCI, Şenol, *Armenian Lobby: The Formation of the Armenian Lobby in the United States and Lobby Activities*, Vol. 1, No. 1, March-April-May 2001, pp. 170-171.

KANTARCI, Şenol, *The Armenian Diaspora In The United States And Canada: The Organizations And Activities*, Vol. 1, No. 3, September-October, November 2001, pp. 332-337.

KANTARCI, Şenol, *Speeches On The Armenian Attributed To Atatürk And His Help To The Victims Of Armenian Terrorists And "Court Marchials"*, Vol. 1, No. 4, December 2001-January-February 2002, pp. 366-368.

KILIÇ, Davut, *The Role of The Echmiyazin Church In Russian Eastern Anatolia Policies*, Vol. 1, No. 2, June-July-August 2001, pp. 220-223.

KILIÇ, Selami, *German Head Of The General Staff, Felix Guse's Article Entitled "1915 Rebellions And Its Results"*, Vol. 1, No. 4, December 2001-January-February 2002, pp. 361-365.

KÜRKÇÜOĞLU, Erol, *Ani Under The Armenian, Byzantium And Turkish Rules*, Vol. 1, No. 4, December 2001-January-February 2002, pp. 365-366.

LÜTEM, Ömer E., *Facts and Comments*, Vol. 1, No. 2, June-July-August 2001, pp. 211-217.

LÜTEM, Ömer E., *Facts and Comments*, Vol. 1, No. 1, March-April-May 2001, pp. 43-47.

ÖZDAĞ, Ümit, *Foreword*, Vol. 1, No. 1, March-April-May 2001, pp. 8-9.

ŞİMŞİR, Bilal N., *On the Historical Origin of Armenian Troubles*, Vol. 1, No. 1, March-April-May 2001, pp. 126-127.

ŞİMŞİR, Bilal N., *Armenian Propaganda In The United States And Ambassador Ahmet Rüstem Bey*, Vol. 1, No. 2, June-July-August 2001, pp. 218-220.

ŞİMŞİR, Bilal N., *Armenian Terror Victims Diplomats were Commemorated*, Vol. 1, No. 1, March-April-May 2001, pp. 184-185.

ŞİMŞİR, Bilal N., *Armenian Lobby In The US And Struggle For the Treaty Of Lausanne(1923-1927)*, Vol. 1, No. 3, September-October-November 2001, pp. 328-332.

ŞİMŞİR, Bilal N., *The Ottoman Ambassador To Washington, Alexandre Mavroyeni And The Armenian Burden (1887 - 1896)*, Vol. 1, No. 4, December 2001-January-February 2002, pp. 359-360.

TACAR, Pulat Y., *The Analysis Of The Alleged Armenian Genocide From The Legal And Ethnical Perspective*, Vol. 1, No. 2, June-July-August 2001, pp. 224-227.

### 3. Book Reviews

ACER, Yücel, *The Ottoman Armenians, Victims Of Great Power Diplomacy by Salahi Ramsdan Sonyel*, Vol. 1, No. 4, December 2001-January-February 2002, pp. 384-387.

KASIM, Kamer, *The Great War And The Tragedy Of Anatolia, Turks And Armenians In The Maelstrom Of Major Powers by Salahi Sonyel*, Vol. 1, No. 3, September-October, November 2001, pp. 364-366.

KASIM, Kamer, *Azerbaycan Belgelerinde Ermeni Sorunu (1918 - 1920) (Armenian Problem In The Azerbaijani Documents 1918 - 1920) by Directorate General of State Archives*, Vol. 1, No. 4, December 2001-January-February 2002, pp. 383-384.

KAYA, İbrahim, *The Armenians In The Late Ottoman Period* by *Türkkaya Ataöv (ed.)*, (*Osmanlı'nın Son Döneminde Ermeniler*), Vol. 1, No. 3, September-October, November 2001, pp. 356-364.

KAYA, İbrahim, *Ermeni Meselesi'nin Siyasi Tarihçesi (1877 – 1914)* (*The Political History Of The Armenian Question 1877 – 1914*) by *Münir Süreyya Bey*, Vol. 1, No. 4, December 2001-January-February 2002, pp. 381-382.

LAÇİNER, Sedat, *Ermeni Tehciri ve Gerçekler*, (*The Relocation of the Armenians and the Realities*), Vol. 1, No. 2, June-July-August 2001, pp. 228-232.

#### 4. Recent Books and Other Sections

*Contents* (For the English Section), Vol. 1, No. 4, December 2001-January-February 2002, pp. 219-220.

*Information For Contributors*, Vol. 1, No. 4, December 2001-January-February 2002, p. 394.

KASIM, Kamer, *"Chronology of 2001"*, Vol. 1, No. 4, December 2001-January-February 2002, pp. 351-358.

LAÇİNER, Sedat (Compiler), *"Recent Books"* (En Son Kitaplar), Vol. 1, No. 2, June-July-August 2001, pp. 244-250.

LAÇİNER, Sedat (Compiler), *"Recent Books"* (En Son Kitaplar), Vol. 1, No. 3, September-October, November 2001, pp. 367-368.

LAÇİNER, Sedat (Compiler), *"Recent Books"* (En Son Kitaplar), Vol. 1, No. 4, December 2001-January-February 2002, pp. 388-390.

#### 5. Documents

*"Announcement of Some Turkish Personalities and Organization Entitled 'Blessed are the Peacemakers' Published by International Herald Tribune on July 10, 2001*, Vol. 1, No. 2, June-July-August 2001, pp. 269-270.

*"The Common Declaration of the Political parties of the Turkish Grand National Assembly on the European Parleiament's Decision"*, Vol. 1, No. 4, December 2001-January-February 2002, pp. 391.

*"Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkey, 28.02.2002, Statement"*, Vol. 1, No. 4, December 2001-January-February 2002, pp. 392-393.

*"Press Release of the British Embassy in Ankara, July 23, 2001"*, Vol. 1, No. 2, June-July-August 2001, pp. 268-269.

*"Resolution No. 21/28 – p. On the Aggression of the Republic of Armenia against the Republic of Azerbaijan Adopted by the Twenty-eight Session of the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers, 25-27 June 2001, Bamako, Mali"*, Vol. 1, No. 2, June-July-August 2001, pp. 264-267.

*September 25 Statement By The Turkish-Armenian Reconciliation Commissioners*, Vol. 1, No. 3, September-October, November 2001, pp. 369-370.

*Speeches (Konuşmalar) in Turkish and English-Konuşmalar, Türkçe ve İngilizce*, Vol. 1, No. 2, June-July-August 2001, pp. 251-263.

*Terms of Reference of the Turkish – Armenian Reconciliation Commission*, July 9, 2001, Vol. 1, No. 2, June-July-August 2001, pp. 267-268.

## **6. Conferences**

*8th DAVO (German Middle East Studies Association) for Contemporary Research and Documentation) Congress, 6-8 September 2001, Göttingen, Germany*, Dr. Sedat LAÇİNER's and Assist Prof. Dr. Kamer KASIM's papers, Vol. 1, No. 3, September-October-November 2001, pp. 348-352.

*Conference On Armenian Problem From Past To Present*, Ömer E. LÜTEM's, Assist. Prof. Dr. Kamer KASIM and Assist. Prof. Dr. İbrahim KAYA's paper presented in the University of Abant İzzet Baysal, Bolu (Turkey), Vol. 1, No. 4, December 2001-January-February 2002, pp. 374-376.

*Generations Of Genocide Conference*, Vol. 1, No. 4, December 2001-January-February 2002, pp. 377-380.

*International Turkish – Armenian History and Culture Symposium*, Assist Prof. Dr. Kamer KASIM's, Dr. Sedat LAÇİNER's and Şenol KANTARCI's papers, Vol. 1, No. 4, December 2001-January-February 2002, pp. 371-373.

LÜTEM, Ömer E., *A Conference in Germany*, Vol. 1, No. 1, March-April-May 2001, pp. 172-173.

*Turkey – Southern Caucasian Relations, and Turkey's Role in Stability in the Region: A Conference in London*, Vol. 1, No. 3, September-October-November 2001, pp. 343-348.

*Turkey's Security and the Armenian Question Symposium 17 – 19 October 2001*, Fırat University, Elazığ, Turkey, Dr. Sedat LAÇİNER, Assist. Prof. Dr. Kamer NOVEMBER and Dr. Yaşar KALAFAT's papers, Vol. 1, No. 3, September-October-November 2001, pp. 352-355.

## B. TURKISH SECTION

### 1. Articles in Turkish

Bronsart Von Schellendorf, *"Talat Paşa İçin Şahitlik"*, Cilt: 1, No: 4, December 2001–January–February 2002, pp. 76-82.

CABBARLI, Hatem, *Rusya'da Ermeni Diasporası: Oluşumu ve Faaliyetleri*, Cilt: 1, No. 3, September-October-November 2001, pp. 131-152.

CABBARLI, Hatem, *Geçmişten Günümüze Ermenistan'da Azerbaycan Türkleri*, Cilt: 1, No: 4, Aralık 2001 – Ocak – Şubat 2002, pp. 122-146.

ÇÖHÇE, Salim, *Büyük Ermenistan'ı Kurma Projesi*, Cilt: 1, No: 1, March-April-May 2001, pp. 87-105.

EDİTÖR, *Editörün Notu*, Cilt: 1, No. 2, June-July-August 2001, pp. 5-6.

EDİTÖR, *Editörün Notu*, Cilt: 1, No: 4, Aralık 2001 – Ocak – Şubat 2002, pp. 11-13.

FEIGL, Erich, *Ermeni Milli Kilisesi'nin Zaferi Ve Trajedisi*, Cilt: 1, No. 2, June-July-August 2001, pp. 65-88.

GÖKA, *"Ermeni Sorunu"nun (Gözden Kaçan) Psikolojik Boyutu*, Cilt: 1, No: 1, March-April-May 2001, pp. 128-136.

İLTER, Erdal, *Lübnan'da Ermeni Diasporası*, Cilt: 1, No. 3, September-October-November 2001, pp. 119-130.

KANTARCI, Şenol, *Ermeni Lobisi: ABD'de Ermeni Diasporası'nın Oluşması ve Lobi Faaliyetleri*, Cilt: 1, No: 1, March – April - May 2001, pp. 139-169.

KANTARCI, Şenol, *ABD ve Kanada'da Ermeni Diasporası: Kuruluşlar ve Faaliyetleri*, Cilt: 1, No: 3, September – October – November 2001, pp. 67-118.

KANTARCI, Şenol, *Ermenilerce Atatürk'e Atfedilen Sözler ve Divan-ı Harb-i Örfi ile Ermeni Teröristler Tarafından Şehit Edilenlere Atatürk'ün Gösterdiği İlgi*, Cilt: 1, No: 4, December 2001–January–February 2002, pp. 92-121.

KILIÇ, Davut, *Rusya'nın Doğu Anadolu Siyaseti'nde Eçmiyazın Kilisesi'nin Rolü (1828-1915)*, Cilt: 1, No. 2, June-July-August 2001, pp. 49-64.

KILIÇ, Selami, *Osmanlı Üçüncü Ordusu Kurmay Başkanı Felix Guse'nin "1915 Ermeni Ayaklanması ve Sonuçları" Adlı Makalesi*, Cilt: 1, No: 4, December 2001–January–February 2002, pp. 55-75.

KÜRKÇÜOĞLU, Erol, *Ermeni, Bizans ve Türk Hakimiyetlerinde Anı*, Cilt: 1, No: 4, December 2001–January–February 2002, pp. 83-91.

LÜTEM, Ömer E., *Olaylar Ve Yorumlar*, Cilt: 1, No. 2, June-July-August 2001, pp. 9-29.

LÜTEM, Ömer E., *Olaylar ve Yorumlar*, Cilt: 1, No: 1, March-April-May 2001, pp. 10-47.

LÜTEM, Ömer E., *Olaylar ve Yorumlar*, Cilt: 1, No. 3, September-October-November 2001, pp. 7-33.

LÜTEM, Ömer E., *Olaylar ve Yorumlar*, Cilt: 1, No: 4, December 2001–January–February 2002, pp. 14-31.

MCCARTHY, Justin, *Bırakın Tarihçiler Karar Versin*, Cilt: 1, No. 2, June-July-August 2001, pp. 113-130.

ÖZDAĞ, Ümit, *Yayına Başlarken*, Cilt: 1, No: 1, March-April-May 2001, pp. 3-7.

ŞİMŞİR, Bilal N., *Ermeni Gaillesinin Tarihsel Kökeni Üzerine*, Cilt: 1, No: 1, March-April-May 2001, pp. 108-125.

ŞİMŞİR, Bilal N., *Ermeni Terörü Kurbanları Şehit Diplomatlarımız Anıldı*, Cilt: 1, No: 1, March-April-May 2001, pp. 175-183.

ŞİMŞİR, Bilal N., *Amerika'da Ermeni Propagandası Ve Büyükelçi Ahmet Rüstem Bey*, Cilt: 1, No. 2, June-July-August 2001, pp. 30-48.

ŞİMŞİR, Bilal, *Amerika'da Ermeni Lobisi ve Lozan Antlaşması*



*Kavgası (1923 – 1927)*, Cilt: 1, No. 3, September-October-November 2001, pp. 34-66.

ŞİMŞİR, Bilal N., *Washington'da Osmanlı Elçisi Alezandre Mavroyeni Bey ve Ermeni Galesi (1887 – 1896)*, Cilt: 1, No: 4, December 2001-January-February 2002, pp. 32-54.

TACAR, Pulat Y., *Ermenilere Soykırım Yapıldığı Savının Hukuksal Ve Ahlaki Açılardan İncelenmesi*, Cilt: 1, No. 2, June-July-August 2001, pp. 89-112.

## 2. Turkish Summaries of the Articles in English

ALP, Ali Hikmet, *Günümüzün Ermenistanı ve Soykırım İddiaları: Milli Kimliğin de Ötesinde Bir Sorun*, Cilt: 1, No. 2, June-July-August 2001, pp. 131-133.

ELEKDAĞ, Şükrü, *Ermeni Sorunu*, Cilt: 1, No: 1, March – April - May 2001, pp. 85-86.

FEIGL, Erich, *Franz Werfel ve "Musa Dağı'nda Kırk Gün": sahte Bir Kitab-ı Mukaddes Görevi yapan Bir Çoksatan*, Cilt: 1, No: 4, December 2001-January-February 2002, pp. 155-156.

İYİGÜNGÖR, Aydan, *Almanya'daki Ermeni Diasporası'nın Profili*, Cilt: 1, No. 3, September-October-November 2001, pp.165-166.

İYİGÜNGÖR, Aydan, *İsrail ve Yahudiler Açısından Ermeni İddialarına Yeni Bir Bakış*, Cilt: 1, No: 4, December 2001-January-February 2002, pp. 170-171.

KANBOLAT, Hasan ve GÜL, *Nazmi, Kafkasya'da Cevaheti (Gürcistan) İle Krasnodar (Rusya) Ermenilerinin Jeopolitiği ve Özerklik Arayışları*, Cilt: 1, No. 2, June-July-August 2001, pp. 139-144.

KASIM, Kamer, *Başlangıcından Barış Sürecine Dağlık Karabağ Çatışması*, Cilt: 1, No. 2, Haziran-Temmuz-Ağustos, 2001, pp. 134-138.

KASIM, Kamer, *Avustralya'da Ermeni Toplumu*, Cilt: 1, No. 3, September-October-November 2001, pp. 169-172.

KASIM, Kamer, *Türk – Ermeni Barışma Komisyonu: Kaçırılan Fırsat*, Cilt: 1, No: 4, December 2001-January-February 2002, pp. 175-160.

KAYA, İbrahim, *Holokost ve Ermeni Sorunu: temel Farklılıklar*,

Cilt: 1, No: 4, December 2001–January–February 2002, pp. 161-163.

KÖNİ, Hasan, *Arnold Toynbee'nin Türkler Üzerine İncelemesi ve Ermeni Propagandasının Doğuşu*, Cilt: 1, No. 2, Haziran-Temmuz-Ağustos, 2001, pp. 133-134.

LAÇİNER, Sedat, *İngiltere'de Ermeni Diasporası Ve Ermeni Sorunu*, Cilt: 1, No. 3, September-October-November 2001, pp. 160-165.

LAÇİNER, Sedat, *Ermenistan'ın Yahudilere Karşı Güvensizliği ve Ermenistan – İsrail İlişkilerine Etkileri*, Cilt: 1, No: 4, December 2001–January–February 2002, pp. 164-169.

MCCARTHY, Justin, *Bırakın Tarihçiler Karar Versin*, Cilt: 1, No: 1, March-April-May 2001, pp. 66-69.

TERZİOĞLU, Aslan, *Yerli Ve Yabancı Kaynaklar Işığında Dr. Bahaddin Şakir'in Berlin'de Öldürülmesi Ve Ermeni Tehciri Meselesi*, Cilt: 1, No. 3, September-October-November 2001, pp. 167-169.

### 3. Book Reviews in Turkish

ACER, Yücel, *The Armenian Allegations and Facts (Ermeni İddiaları ve Gerçekler)*, Cilt: 1, No. 2, June-July-August 2001, pp. 238-242.

ACER, Yücel, *OTAM Dergisi*, Cilt: 1, No. 3, September-October-November 2001, pp. 193-195.

ACER, Yücel, *Türk Tarihinde Ermeniler*, Temel Kitap, Cilt: 1, No: 4, December 2001–January–February 2002, pp. 196-200.

GÜNEY, Çetin, *1856-1923, Emperyalizm Kıskaçında; Kürtler, Türkler, Ermeniler*, Cilt: 1, No. 2, June-July-August 2001, pp. 242-243.

KANTARCI, Şenol, *Teşkilatın İki Silahşoru Biri Meşrutiyet'in Silahşoru Dede Yakup Cemil Diğer Cumhuriyet'in Silahşoru Torun "Yakup Cemil", Soner Yalçın*, Cilt: 1, No. 3, September-October-November 2001, pp. 187-195.

KANTARCI, Şenol, *An American Physician In Turkey: A Narrative Of Adventures In Peace And In War, Clarence Douglas Ussher and M. D. Grace H. KNAPP*, Cilt: 1, No. 4, December 2001-January-February 2002, pp. 200-203.

KASIM, Kamer, *Ermeniler'in Devletleşme Sınavı, Bağımsızlıktan Bugüne Ermeni Siyasi Düşünüşü (The Challenge of Statehood, Armenian Political Thinking Since Independence)*, Vol. 1, No. 2, June-July-August 2001, pp. 232-235.

KAYA, İbrahim, *Armenian and Russian Oppressions (1914-1916) – Testimonies of Witnesses (Ermeni ve Rus Mezalimi, 1914-1916, Tanıkların İfadeleri)*, Cilt: 1, No. 2, June-July-August 2001, pp. 236-238.

LAÇİNER, Sedat, *Armenian Van / Vaspurakan (Ermeni Van / Vaspurakan)*, Richard G. Hovanissian (ed.), Cilt: 1, No. 3, September-October-November 2001, pp. 183-187.

ŞİMŞİR, Bilal, T. C. Devlet Arşivleri Genel Müdürlüğü'nün Ermeni Sorunu Tarihiyle İlgili Son Yayınları, Cilt: 1, No: 4, December 2001–January–February 2002, pp. 184-195.

#### 4. Recent Books and Other Sections in Turkish

2002 Ermeni Araştırmaları Yarışması İlanı ve Şartnamesi, Cilt: 1, No: 4, December 2001–January–February 2002, pp. 211-213.

İçindekiler, (Türkçe Bölüm İçin), Cilt: 1, No: 4, December 2001–January–February 2002, pp. 5-6.

KASIM, Kamer (Edited by / Hazırlayan), "2001 Yılı Kronolojisi", Cilt: 1, No: 4, December 2001–January–February 2002, pp. 147-154.

LAÇİNER, Sedat (Derleyen), "En Son Kitaplar" (Recent Books), Cilt: 1, No. 2, June-July-August 2001, pp. 244-250.

LAÇİNER, Sedat (Derleyen), "En Son Kitaplar" (Recent Books), Cit: 1, No. 3, September-October-November 2001, pp. 196-199.

LAÇİNER, Sedat (Derleyen), "En Son Kitaplar" (Recent Books), Cilt: 1, No: 4, December 2001–January–February 2002, pp. 204-207.

Yazarlar İçin Bilgi Notu, Cilt: 1, No: 4, December 2001–January–February 2002, p. 214.

**5. Interview in Turkish**

*İki Büyükelçi Ermeni Sorununu Tartışıyor*, Cilt: 1, No. 3, September – October - November 2001, pp. 153-159.

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*Fransa Parlamentosu'nda Sözde Ermeni Soykırımı İle İlgili Yasanın Kabul Edilmesine İlişkin Dışişleri Bakanlığı Basın Açıklaması (18 Ocak 2001)*, Cilt: 1, No: 1, March-April-May 2001, s. 191.

*Fransa Parlamentosun'da Sözde Ermeni Soykırımı İle İlgili Yasanın Kabul Edilmesine İlişkin Hükümet Açıklaması (18 Ocak 2001)*, Cilt: 1, No: 1, March-April-May 2001, pp. 190.

*Fransız Senatosu'nun Sözde Ermeni Soykırımı Konusunda Kabul Ettiği Yasa Tasarısı Hakkında Dışişleri Bakanlığı'nın Basın Açıklaması (8 November 2000)*, Cilt: 1, No: 1, March-April-May 2001, 187-188.

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*TBMM'den Avrupa Parlamentosu Kararına Tepki*, Cilt: 1, No: 4, December 2001–January–February 2002, p. 208.

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2. Ataöv, *A Statement....*, p. 22.
3. Charles van der Leeuw, 'Newly Independent Azerbaijan: Ever-Present Gunsmoke and the Kremlin's Long Arm', in Antero Leitzinger (ed.), *Caucasus and an Unholy Alliance*, (Vantaa: Leitzinger Books, 1997), pp. 48-52.
4. Arslan Terzioğlu, 'The Assassination of Dr. Bahaddin Sakir...', *Armenian Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 3, September-October-November 2001, pp. 274-304.

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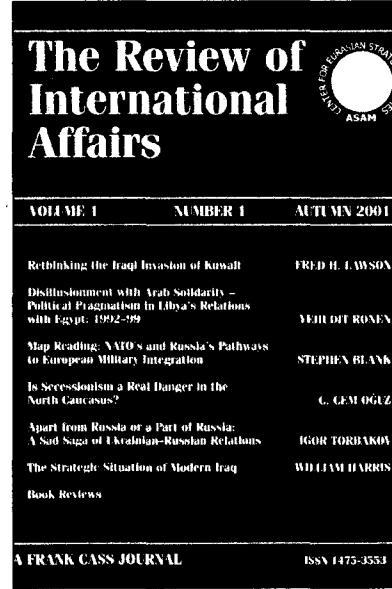
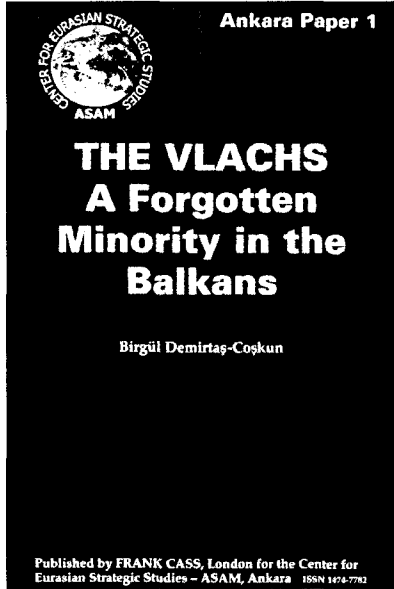
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