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A strip of land situated between the Mediterranean and the Black Seas, the post-Soviet Caucasus embarked on a painful identity quest at the turn of the third millennium. This – still ongoing – quest involves several daunting choices: between Moscow, Washington and Brussels, between oil and democratic values, and between feudal realities and revolutionary ideals. Throughout the last decade, the Yerevan-based Caucasus Institute has been conducting in-depth research of the conflicting and often subtle trends in the regions' politics. This volume contains a selection of research papers published by the Caucasus Institute since 2001 in Armenian, Russian and English, which best represent the challenges faced by this varied region at this crucial stage of development.

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ARMENIA – TURKEY: DIVIDED BY HISTORY, UNITED BY GEOGRAPHY¹

By Alexander Iskandaryan²

Memory of the Genocide has long held a dominant position in the Armenians' ethnic self-identification paradigm. Official history textbooks include chapters on the Genocide. Specialised encyclopaedic reference-books on the Genocide are published. The symbolic date of the Genocide is an official day of mourning. The Genocide is regularly covered in television programs, newspaper and magazine stories. There are also folk versions of the Genocide. A large share of Armenia's population consists of descendants of Genocide survivors, mainly those who managed to somehow flee to the Russian Empire. Therefore, oral family histories are shared with children.

The memory of the tragedy plays a very important role in the Armenian value system and, therefore, has become one of the pillars of the national idea, reflected in the policies of the newly independent Republic of Armenia. The events of the early 20th century remain an essential factor influencing relations between Turkey and Armenia. Against the backdrop of official Yerevan's intention to establish bilateral diplomatic ties with Ankara, this factor hardly plays a defining role, however, undoubtedly, the history of the Genocide has an enormous indirect influence on Armenia's attitude towards Turkey. The majority of Armenia's population consider Ankara's refusal to recognize the Genocide³ at least as a monstrous injustice and as a sign of hostility.

1 This article was originally published in 2006 in Turkey in the Turkish and German languages by the Istanbul Bureau of the Heinrich Böll Foundation, and was the first publication on the Genocide by a scientist from Armenia to see light in Turkish in Turkey. See: Iskandarian, Alexander. "Armenien und die Türkei: Geographisch verbunden – durch die Geschichte getrennt." *Wenn Man die Armenienfrage diskutiert... / "Coğrafyanın Birleştirip Tarihini Ayırdığı İki Ülke: Ermenistan ve Türkiye." Ermeni Sorunu Tartışılırken ...* – Istanbul: Heinrich Böll Stiftung, 2006. – Pp.7-19/7-17. It was also published in Russian by the Caucasus Institute with minor amendments: Iskandaryan, Alexander. "Armenia-Turtsia: razdelennye istoriyei, splochyonnye geografiey." *Kavkaz – 2006. Yezhegodnik Instituta Kavkaza*. ("Armenia-Turkey: Divided by History, United by Geogaphy." *Caucasus Yearbook 2006*). Ed. by Alexander Iskandaryan. – Yerevan: Caucasus Institute, 2008. – Pp.228-242.

2 The author has been the director of the Yerevan-based Caucasus Institute since 2005.

3 According to Turkish scholars Bülent Aras and Havva Karakas-Keles, under the Kemalist system, which is based on the priority of the supranational, recognition of the Armenian Genocide is impossible for fear of losing its long-lasting domination. Consequently, denial of the Armenian Genocide

Though not caused by the Genocide, Ankara's adamant stance on the establishment of diplomatic ties and the opening of the Turkish-Armenian border, its continuing blockade of Armenia's overland communication and its tough stance on the Karabakh conflict all serve to reinforce the Armenians' perception of Turkey as heir to the Ottoman Empire.

However, in the foreign policy arena, the intensity of debates about recognition and condemnation of the Genocide is defined by additional factors, including the personal preferences of Armenian presidents. For example, the first president of the Republic of Armenia, Levon Ter-Petrossyan, did not push the topic of Genocide in his dealings with Turkey. Since 1998, when Armenia's second president was elected for his first term, the issue of the Genocide has played an increasingly important role in Armenia's foreign policy.⁴ After Robert Kocharyan's re-election, the issue of the Genocide was raised on numerous occasions by the president himself and by Armenia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs led at that time by Vardan Oskanyan.

The official position of the Armenian government was announced by then-President Kocharyan in his official address to the participants of an international conference on the 90th anniversary of the Genocide, held in Yerevan in April 2005. Kocharyan said, amongst other things, that "international recognition and condemnation of the Genocide of Armenians is not just Armenia's task. Today it has to be viewed in the context of regional and international politics. We have continually emphasised that Armenians don't seek vengeance. Even now, we state our determination to mend our relationship with Turkey. However, Turkey's negative attitude towards this issue perplexes the international community as well as Armenia."⁵

Additionally, the issue of Genocide recognition by Armenia is used by various actors as a bargaining chip while dealing with Turkey, regardless of the wishes of Armenia or its government.

In recent years, both the United States and the European Union have been actively involved in this. The use of the Genocide in the EU's policy towards Turkey is primarily defined by desire to exert pressure on Turkey, not by pursuit of justice

is based on historical and social premises connected with a nationalistic perception by Turkey of its state establishment, which in its turn causes concern for the Armenian establishment. See: Aras, Bülent, and Havva Karakas-Keles. "Armeniano-turetskie otnosheniya: kritichesky analiz." *Tsentral'naya Azia i Kavkaz*. ("Armenian-Turkish relationship: critical analysis." *Central Asia and the Caucasus*). – #4 (22), 2002 (in Russian). – Pp.125-129.

4 Safrastyan, Ruben. "Problema priznaniya genotsida vo vneshney politike Armenii: raznouronovnyy analiz." *21 vek* ("The Problem of Genocide Recognition in Armenia's Foreign Policy: Multi-Level Analysis." *21st Century*). – #1, 2005 (in Russian). – P.3.

5 The speech can be accessed at www.president.am.

or advancing Armenia's interests. The threat of American politicians and military to recognize the Armenian Genocide was primarily a response to Turkish leaders' unconventional and inappropriate behaviour during the military campaign in Iraq. Such US and EU policy, though not addressed to Armenia as a state or to Armenians as a nation, nevertheless influences the Armenian diasporas in the States and in European countries as well as the Republic of Armenia itself.

Moreover, an international campaign for the recognition of the Armenian Genocide was launched by the Armenian diaspora in 2000-2005 with some success. During these years, the Armenian Genocide was officially recognized in various formats by France, Sweden, Belgium, Switzerland, Slovakia and Poland, with the latter two countries starting a new trend of genocide recognition by new EU members. The German Bundestag also adopted an official document on the events of 1915; though it did not use the word *genocide*, the document still caused anxiety among Turkish leaders. The Hungarian parliament had also scheduled a bill on the recognition of the Armenian Genocide, which it postponed after a visit to Hungary of the then Turkish Foreign Minister Abdullah Gül.

All this had some impact on people living in Armenia. The drafting of recognition documents did not only involve diaspora Armenians but also historians specializing on Armenian-Turkish relations in the early 20th century. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, Armenia and its diaspora have become a lot closer, and so have historians in Armenia and abroad. Consequently, the recognition of the Genocide by the parliaments and governments of various countries was perceived as victory by Armenia and the Armenian diaspora alike.

RECENT TRENDS

On April 24, 2005, Armenia and the numerous Armenian communities abroad commemorated the 90th anniversary of the Genocide. Mourning events were held in Armenia and in countries with influential Armenian communities. Closer to the anniversary, there was a surge in lobbying activity, ranging from placing the issue of the Genocide on the agenda of the US Congress and legislative bodies of other countries, to concerts by the famous American-Armenian rock band, *System of a Down*. Protest rallies and marches were held in front of Turkish embassies in many countries. In the run-up to April 24, 2005, Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan sent an official written address to Armenian President Robert Kocharyan, with a suggestion "to set up a joint commission for studying the events of 1915."

A copy of the address was forwarded to US Congressmen in the Turkish-Ameri-

can friendship group. They, in turn, distributed it among other Congress members.⁶ Some of the provisions of the address were approved by officials in Washington.⁷ A statement by President George W. Bush, which, like all previous statements made on the occasion of the Genocide by US presidents, did not use the word “Genocide,” encouraged Armenia to accept the Turkish initiative, and so did a statement by Germany’s Chancellor Gerhard Schroder.

In his reply, President Kocharyan encouraged the Turkish Prime Minister to normalize relations between the two countries and to establish an intergovernmental commission on problematic issues. Virtually simultaneously, the Turkish parliament adopted a declaration condemning any accusations against Turkey regarding the Armenian Genocide. The declaration included the following paragraph: “Armenia has to unquestioningly accept Turkey’s offer to reassess mutual history if it is willing to establish good-neighbourly relations with Turkey.” The declaration also condemned the passing of resolutions on the Armenian Genocide by parliaments of foreign countries.⁸

In Armenia, the attitude towards the Genocide is not prone to change. No influential political actors in Armenia contest the need to recognize the Genocide. At the same time, the current regime’s attitude arouses criticism from members of the previous government who left politics after Ter-Petrosyan resigned from office. Usually, such statements cause backlash, but so far, the revisionists have not been labelled traitors.

A reaction towards a statement by Gurgun Arsenyan, the leader of the United Labour party, can be considered an example of domestic bickering. He spoke about the need to re-evaluate the traditional interpretation and assessment of the early 20th century events from the perspective of victimising Turkish people, including subsequent generations. Predictably, the Dashnaktsyutun Party (Armenian Revolutionary Federation) heavily criticized this statement, because international condemnation of the Armenian Genocide is one of this party’s key aims.

Despite permanent tension between Armenia and Turkey, the two countries have signed bilateral treaties on student exchange between universities. There are frequent performances by music and dance bands. For example, in the autumn of

6 Noyan Tapan, №20, 16.05.2005.

7 It cannot be ruled out that the wording of the address had been approved by Washington in advance.

8 Turkish Parliament Issues Declaration against Armenian Claims, <http://www.turkishpress.com/news.asp?id=40311>.

2002, the Turkish Presidential Quartet paid a visit to Yerevan. In the realm of tourism, there is a one-way flow, from Armenia to Turkey.

Turkish citizens are not particularly interested in visiting Armenia, perhaps to some extent due to the stereotype that it is not safe for Turks to visit Armenia. The influx of Armenian tourists to Turkish Mediterranean resorts is annually increasing. There are also large numbers of Armenian labour migrants in Turkey. In recent years, Kaan Soyak, the head of the Turkish-Armenian Business Development Council (TABDC) facilitated the organization of pilgrimages for Armenians from Armenia and diaspora to sacred sites on the territory of modern Turkey.

In Armenia, the far from perfect condition of Armenian historical heritage on Turkish territory is a hot topic for discussion. Against the backdrop of the tense relationship, the demolition of monuments of Armenian culture in Turkey is viewed as “cultural genocide” in Armenia. Some positive steps have been taken to improve the situation: Turkey thus spearheaded the reconstruction of Akhtamar Monastery, built in the 10th century A.D. on an island in Lake Van. However, Armenian experts were not allowed to take part in the reconstruction process, which caused a flurry of angry reports in the Armenian press. The monastery was opened in the spring of 2007 albeit without a cross on top.

Some Armenian nationalist youth groups organized protests aimed at banning Turkish goods from Armenia. However, this idea has not won popular support, and a wide range of Turkish goods is available from Yerevan’s shops and markets.

Changes in recent years in Turkey, especially where the publication of books is concerned, are widely discussed in Armenia. Books about the Genocide, including the work of Taner Akçam and Vahakn Dadrian, have seen light in Turkey, something which would have been unimaginable previously.

ECONOMIC DIMENSION

The almost 350-km-long Turkish-Armenian border was closed back in 1993 due to Ankara’s position in relation to the Karabakh issue. The only direct connection between Armenia and Turkey is the Istanbul-Yerevan flight operating since 1996. The flow of Turkish goods reaches Armenia mainly via Georgian territory. According to Kaan Soyak, the trade turnover between Armenia and Turkey reaches at least \$100-120 million annually.⁹ According to data collected by the US Embassy in Armenia, Turkey is Armenia’s seventh largest trade partner. Given the absence of official ties

⁹ *Azg*, 14.08.2005.

with Armenia, Turkish goods intended for Armenia either have Russia or Georgia shown as points of destination, or are exported via fake companies, most often registered in Switzerland, in which case Turkey is not shown as the country of origin.

The trade turnover can change drastically in case of the opening of Turkish-Armenian border and the unblocking of communication routes connecting the two countries. Members of the local government in the underdeveloped regions of Eastern Turkey have repeatedly advocated for the opening of the Armenian-Turkish border and for establishing trade and economic ties with the Armenian business community.

In Armenia itself, there is no consensus¹⁰ among officials and the general public on the opening the Turkish-Armenian border. The majority of analysts and politicians are in favour of opening the border; opponents motivate their position by the perceived necessity to protect domestic production from the influx of cheap Turkish goods and the risk of becoming overly dependent on exporting Armenian goods to Turkey. Businessmen mainly lobby for opening of the border, as they consider it an opportunity to export their goods at low tariffs through the territory of Turkey to international markets. In any case, this is largely an economic discourse with no connection to historical disagreements.¹¹

CONFERENCE ON THE GENOCIDE

In the run-up to the 90th anniversary of Genocide, several international conferences dedicated to the anniversary were convened in Armenia and abroad. On April 18, 2005, the Armenian National Academy of Sciences held a conference entitled “Genocide: Reality and Condemnation.” The then President of the Armenian National Academy of Sciences Fadey Sargsyan stated in his speech at the conference that “we are currently witnessing an unprecedented surge in the number of countries recognising Armenian genocide. Today the international community is more than ever inclined to recognising and condemning this monstrous crime against humanity. This is the reality, and Turkey cannot ignore it.”¹²

On April 20-21, 2005, a high-profile international conference entitled “A Grave Crime, an Extreme Challenge. Genocide and Human Rights” was held in Yerevan,

10 Officials in Yerevan consider the border to be closed on the Turkish side only, not on the Armenian side.

11 Gültekin, Burcu. “Cross-border Cooperation Between Turkey and the South Caucasus: Prospects for Sub-regional Integration.” *From Economy of War to Economy of Peace in the South Caucasus*. – London: International Alert, 2004. – P.47.

12 *Golos Armenii*, 19.05.2005.

attended by over 50 scholars from 20 countries. The conference's sessions were broadcast live on TV, and the conference was considered a very important event. In his opening speech, Armenian Foreign Minister Vardan Oskanyan said that "the demand to recognise Armenian genocide extends beyond the interest of Armenians, it is gaining international importance." Regarding a widespread allegation in Turkey that Armenia opposes Turkey's EU accession, Oskanyan added that "probably the best outcome for Armenia would be a European Turkey adhering to European standards. We would like Turkey to be our European neighbour and become a developed democracy that would ensure the preservation of our historical monuments and churches. The question is: Does Turkey adhere to European standards?"¹³

In his speech at the conference, President Kocharyan said that "we were the victims of the First World War, though we did not start it. Our right to remembrance fell victim to the Cold War, though we did not initiate it. The term "genocide" did not exist during the execution of a designed policy to exterminate Armenians. There was no definition of the term. It took time for underlying principles of humanity not to be sacrificed for geopolitical interests of world powers, and for morality to become an integral part of the policy of civilized countries. The path to this truth was tragic for many peoples. For Armenians this path cost the lives of 1.5 million people. However, the Armenian question continues to remain victim to geopolitical interests."¹⁴

Later in his speech, the president added that "recognition has a vast potential of counteraction. It is particularly important for preventing the crime. Condemnation of genocides that occurred in the past is essential. First of all it proves that the crime has no time limitation and that the perpetrators will be brought to justice anyways. This will have a restraining influence on and act as a preventing factor for those planning to commit genocide."¹⁵ Talking about the official stance of the republic of Armenia, Kocharyan noted that "the republic of Armenia as an independent state has clearly expressed its attitude: the recognition is equally essential for preventing future genocides. The recognition is important for Armenian-Turkish relations as it will answer numerous questions existing between our two peoples and will enable us to look into the future. Our memories of the past of full of bitterness but there is no hatred. We are struggling to understand negative reaction of the Turkish side which is manifested not only in denial of the past but also in the blockade of Armenia. We are facing a paradox which needs to be thought out. The side responsible for the crime bears malice and not the victim."

13 *Golos Armenii*, 23.05.2005.

14 www.yerkir.am, 20.04.2005.

15 www.yerkir.am, 20.04.2005.

The speech made by the president of the Republic of Nagorno-Karabakh, Arkady Ghukasyan, was quite a bit tougher. He drew parallels between the genocide of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire and Azerbaijan's policy with regard to the Armenian population during the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh.¹⁶ Marie-Anne Isler-Béguin, the Chairwoman of EU-Armenia Parliamentary Cooperation Committee, also spoke at the conference, mentioning that "injustice can be eliminated by recognising injustice, it is necessary not only for the humankind, but for the executors of the injustice. Recognition is not easy, first of all emotions should be held back so that the Turkish state and the people could publicly recognize the event, in the way Germany did in relation to Jews."¹⁷

Among the guests of the conference there was a delegation of scientists and journalists from Turkey and a delegation from Israel. Interestingly, in the sidelines of the conference, a verbal dual took place between two Turkish scholars, Taner Akçam and Baksin Oran. Professor Akçam spoke in favour of the recognition and condemnation of the Armenian Genocide and put forward a range of brave propositions regarding the issue of Turkish identity and the source of development of the Turkish state, whereas Professor Oran claimed that Armenia's efforts to promote recognition on the international arena threaten the process of democratisation in Turkey. Professor Murad Belge from Bilgi University in Istanbul noted in his speech that only *force-majeure* circumstances could help Turkey to somehow delay the process of recognition of the Genocide by various countries including Turkey itself. Professor Oran warned Armenian scholars of "the threat of complete victory" and encouraged them not to use the term "genocide" to describe the events of the early 20th century.¹⁸ According to him, Turkish liberal intelligentsia needed time to prepare the Turkish society for recognition of the Armenian Genocide.

Yossi Sarid, a member of the Israeli Knesset, said in his speech at the conference that "condemnation of the crime will promote prevention of new cases of genocides and encourage reconciliation of the two peoples." Giving a speech on behalf of his colleagues, he expressed regret that he did not represent the government of Israel: "Being an opposition politician, I am giving a speech on behalf of the majority population of Israel and Jewish diasporas scattered all over the world."¹⁹ Mr Sarid called on the Turkish government to recognise the Armenian genocide, noting at the same

16 The speech by Arkady Ghukasyan: *Golos Armenii*, 23.05.2005.

17 *Golos Armenii*, 23.05.2005.

18 *Golos Armenii*, 23.04.2005.

19 "Yossi Sarid called on the Turkish government to assume responsibility for the Armenian Genocide." *Yerkir News*, www.yerkir.am, 21.04.2005.

time that current Turkish authorities do not bear direct responsibility for the tragic events of 1915. The Israeli politician also emphasised the need to join efforts in order to make Turkey to recognise the Genocide. Another participant of the conference from Israel, Yehuda Bauer, scientific consultant of the Jerusalem Commission of Holocaust Victims, noted in his speech that: “If the US recognises the genocide of 1915, Israel will follow suit thirty seconds later” According to Bauer, “Israel will not recognise the genocide of 1915 under the pressure from Turkey, however Turkish intelligentsia recognises this heinous crime.”²⁰

Juan Mendez, Special Adviser of the UN Secretary General, also participated in the conference. Although in his speech Mendez did not define the events that took place 90 years ago as “genocide,” in his interview to journalists he noted that, “should UN member states raise the issue of categorizing the events as genocide, it will definitely be considered.”²¹

The former president of Poland, Lech Wałęsa, was a guest of honour and a speaker at the conference. Regarding the denial of genocide by Turkey, Mr Wałęsa later said that “we believe that Turkey, rather than feel resentment towards us, should continue maintaining top-level friendly relations with Poland. Turkey should not pressure us into making a choice between Armenians and Turks. If Turkey claims that there are not enough documents, then an effort should be made to find more. Turks need to find documents about the dealings of their forefathers during the First World War in Anatolia.” Later on, during in the conference, he made the following remark, “Turks are unwilling to apologise to Armenians. Meanwhile Germans apologised to us thus resolving the problem.”²²

PUBLICATIONS

There are tens of thousands of publications on the Armenian Genocide. This paper will only look at the publications on the Armenian genocide that saw light in recent years and at the main topics they cover. Naturally, the majority of publications on the Armenian Genocide of course are produced in the Republic of Armenia, the bulk of them published by the Museum-Institute of the Genocide of Armenians, founded in Yerevan in 1995. Such publications cover a variety subjects including history and historiography of the Genocide,²³ the history and current status of Turkey-Armenia

20 www.yerkir.am, 21.04.2005.

21 www.yerkir.am, 21.04.2005.

22 *Golos Armenii*, 19.05.2005.

23 The Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute (AGMI) periodically issues a publication called

relations, the problems of historical memory and the Genocide, witness accounts of the Genocide²⁴ and the condition of the Armenian cultural and historical heritage on the territory of modern-day Turkey.²⁵

Collections of documents on the Genocide stored in archives in various countries²⁶ have also been published. Among recent publications, lists of the genocide victims and descriptions of property loss due to the Genocide,²⁷ and, notably, a body of research on mass harassment and genocide of other ethnic groups living on the territory of the Ottoman Empire.²⁸

Many research papers on the genocide are also published in the diaspora; some of those publications, notably, the work of Vahakn Dadrian, Ruben Adalian and Stepan Asturian, have also been reprinted in Armenia.²⁹ “The Burning Tigris: The Armenian Genocide and America’s Responses”³⁰ by Peter Balakian thus saw light

Issues of History and Historiography of the Armenian Genocide containing documents in Armenian, Russian and English. Documents on the history and historiography of the Armenian Genocide are also published separately. The following publication on the subject is also of interest: Hovhannisyán, Nikolay. *Arab Historiography on the Armenian Genocide*. – Yerevan: Institute of Oriental Studies and Zangak-97 Press, 2005 (in Armenian).

24 Gibbons, Herbert Adams. *The Blackest Page of Modern History. The Events of 1915 in Armenia. The Facts and the Responsibilities*. – Yerevan: AGMI, 2003 (in Armenian; UK edition – London: G. P. Putnam's sons, 1916); Lepsius, Johannes. *The Secret Report. The Massacres of the Armenian People*. – Yerevan: AGMI, 2003 (in Armenian); *Unknown Names: French Armenophiles (late 19th – early 20th century)*. Ed. by Marat Gharazyan. – Yerevan: AGMI, 2003.

25 Hovhannisyán, Anush. *Cultural Genocide on Turkish Territory*. – Yerevan: Institute of Oriental Studies, 2005; *The Armenian Architecture: a Cultural Genocide*. – Montreal: Armenian National Committee of Canada, 2005 (photo documentary).

26 *Russia and the Armenian Genocide in 1915-1917* (collection of documents). Translated and compiled by Arman Marukyan. – Yerevan: AGMI, 2004 (in Armenian); *Reports on the Armenian Genocide by Austro-Hungarian diplomats (1915-1918)*. Ed. by Artem Ohadjanian. – Yerevan: AGMI, 2004 (in Armenian); *The US Official Documents on the Armenian Genocide*. Compiled by Ara Sarafian, ed. by Lavrenty Barsegyan. – Yerevan: AGMI, 2004 (in Armenian.); *The Armenian Genocide in Reports by German Diplomats (1915-1918)*. Compiled by Vardges Mikaelyan. – Yerevan: AGMI, 2004 (in Armenian.); Ohadjanian, Artem. *1915 Irrefutable Evidence. Austrian Documents on the Armenian Genocide*. – Yerevan: AGMI, 2004.

27 *The List of Victims of the Armenian Genocide (1915-1923)*. Vol. I, Sebastia. – Yerevan: AGMI, 2004 (in Armenian).

28 Khosroeva, Anahit. *The Assyrian Genocide in the Ottoman Turkey and The Neighbouring Territories Populated by Turks (late 19th – early 20th)*. – Yerevan, 2004 (in Armenian).

29 Adalian, Rouben Paul. *Remembering and Understanding the Armenian Genocide*. – Yerevan: AGMI, 2004; Astourian, Stephan H. *Modern Turkish Identity and the Armenian Genocide. From Prejudice to Racist Nationalism*. – Yerevan: AGMI, 2004.

30 Balakian, Peter. *The Burning Tigris, The Armenian Genocide and America's Response*. – HarperCollins, 2003.

in 2003. Among recent publications on the subject, there is a study by Verjine Svazlian, “The Armenian Genocide and Historic Memory,” which saw light in several languages.³¹

In her work, Svazlian describes the events of 1915 based on witness accounts of over 650 Genocide survivors and relatives of Genocide victims. A voluminous work by Hayk Ghazaryan, “The Genocide of the Armenian People in the Ottoman Empire,” was also published in several languages. Other publications focus on support offered to Genocide survivors, the policy of particular states with regards to the Armenian Genocide, and the human rights’ perspective on the Genocide.³²

TRIAL OF A TURKISH SCHOLAR

The case of a Turkish researcher, which was not directly connected to the subject of the Genocide, evoked a wide response in Armenia. Turkish scholar Yektan Türkyilmaz, who had been visiting Armenia since 2003, was detained on June 17, 2005, at Zvartnots airport in Yerevan.

A large collection of 17th to 20th century books of cultural and historical value was found in his baggage while he was attempting to take it out of the country. The books were confiscated, and the Turkish citizen was charged with smuggling under article 215 of the Penal Code of the Republic of Armenia. Several features make this case unprecedented. First, Türkyilmaz was the first Turkish scientist who applied for and was granted permission to work in Armenian archives. Second, his scientific views include recognition of the Armenian Genocide, in opposition to official Turkish historiography. Third, his arrest caused a stir among the general public and not just the scientific community. Predictably, the case of Türkyilmaz was politicised. The Penal Code of Armenia, a legacy of the Soviet Penal Code, prescribed a disproportionately severe punishment for the scientist’s offense; in fact, that particular article of the code had never been administered in independent Armenia.

31 Svazlian, Verjine. *The Armenian Genocide and Historical Memory*. – Yerevan: AGMI, 2004.

32 Egge, Bjørn. *Fridtjof Nansen’s Struggle for Human Rights and Human Dignity*. – Yerevan: AGMI, 2003 (in Armenian); Bagdasaryan, Robert. *The Genocide and the Armenian Intelligentsia of Russia*. – Yerevan: AGMI, 2003 (in Russian); Oghanyan, Pascual Carlos. “*The Genocide of the Armenian Nation and the Protection of Human Rights*.” – Yerevan: AGMI, 2003 (in Russian); Ternon, Yves. *Impunity, Revenge and Denial. The Armenian Genocide in International Courts*. – Yerevan: AGMI, 2003 (in Armenian); Marukyan, Armen. *The Armenian Question and Russia’s Policy (1915-1917)*. – Yerevan: AGMI, 2003 (in Russian); Tunyan, Valeriy. *Young Turks and the Armenian Question (1908-1912). Part I*. – Yerevan: AGMI, 2004 (in Russian).

Türkyilmaz was held in detention which was obviously an excessive measure. It was understood in Armenia that keeping a Turkish scientist under arrest could cause repercussions; in this context Foreign Minister Oskanyan's statement should be noted, in particular the following sentence: "it does not matter how you justify this incident, the international community will turn it into a political issue and will view it in the context of Armenian-Turkish relations, in particular, where the archives and recognition of the Genocide are concerned."³³ In Armenia, a campaign to free Türkyilmaz was launched; human rights and civil society activists were fighting for a minimal sentence to be passed on Türkyilmaz.

Additionally, according to Hrant Dink,³⁴ who was from 1996 to 2007 editor-in-chief of the Armenian newspaper *Agos* published in Turkey, Türkyilmaz's trip to Armenia was considered controversial by the public in Turkey, as he was one of the scientists implicitly recognizing the 1915-1923 Genocide of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire. The arrest of the Turkish scholar was condemned by some Western mass media, which viewed it as reflecting the tough stance of Armenian authorities. Turkish experts in Armenian studies petitioned Armenian President Robert Kocharyan on behalf of Türkyilmaz. Armenian media published statements by members of the Armenian scholarly community, calling for the most lenient sentence.

During both the investigation and the trial, the detainee insisted that the offence was committed by him inadvertently. The court sentenced Yektan Türkyilmaz to a two-year suspended jail term. He was released from custody in the courtroom. The court also ordered the confiscation of the books Türkyilmaz had attempted to take out of Armenia.³⁵ The sentence can be considered symbolic given that, according to the Armenian Penal Code, the Turkish scholar was facing up to eight years in prison. After the court ruling, Türkyilmaz did not raise any claims against law enforcement authorities or the government of the Republic of Armenia, and said that he would continue research in the scientific field of his choice.

33 Danielyan, Emil. "Oskanian Hails Turkish Scholar's Release". RFE/RL, 29.08.2005.

34 Hrant Dink was murdered in January 2007 by Ogün Samast, a 19-year old Turkish nationalist. The murder caused frenzy both in Armenia and in the world. The killing gave rise to mass protests in Turkey itself and became an important event in its public life.

35 Danielyan, Emil, *op.cit.*

CONCLUSION

Overall, we can conclude that, with regard to the Genocide, there is a public consensus in Armenia, involving the elites and the society at large. The general public as well the professional community of historians and historiographers rules out the very possibility to contest the fact of the Genocide. There are numerous documents, studies, books and historical data on the Genocide. According to professional historians, the fact of Genocide was proven a long time ago, and no new evidence is needed.³⁶ Moreover, the Genocide affected so many Armenians that the memory is still alive in people's minds; children learn about the Genocide from family stories as well as from history books. Any attempt to debate the fact of Genocide is perceived as sacrilege, and initiating a discussion on the subject is viewed as blasphemous.

The very idea to set up a commission, made up of historians of any nationality, that would verify *the fact* of the Genocide, is totally unacceptable in Armenia.³⁷ It would be similar to starting a discussion in Israel on whether or not the Holocaust actually took place. A scholar (or any other person for that matter) doubting the fact of Genocide would be viewed in Armenia not so much as a traitor but as a lunatic. Consequently, in the Armenians' public perception, the ball is in Turkey's court. Turkey's non-recognition of the Genocide is seen a manifestation of hostility that has no relevance to history.

In addition, the topic is highly politicised. The Genocide issue is to some degree hostage to the troubled Armenia-Turkey relationship, which was shaped not only by history, but by a tangle of problems in the Armenia-Azerbaijan-Turkey triangle.

36 Armenian archives have been open for a long time to any country and researchers of any nationality, Hamlet Gasparyan, Press Secretary of Armenia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, told *Armenpress* news agency, commenting on a statement made by Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan to the effect that Turkish archives were open whereas Armenian ones were closed. According to Gasparyan, "where there is true willingness and courage to improve a relationship, pretexts become irrelevant." "So far, many international scholars, except for Turkish ones, have worked in our archives. Scholars from Turkey are welcome to come here and see for themselves," said Gasparyan, adding that "everyone has known the truth for a long time, let us leave propaganda aside and sit down to negotiations."

37 "Historians have researched the Genocide of Armenians in Turkey and given their opinion a long time ago. Turkey should base its policy on this body of research, historians do not have anything to add to this issue," said Minister of Foreign Affairs of Armenia Vardan Oskanyan in his comment to a statement by Turkish Prime-Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan who suggested that scholars "research the issue of the alleged genocide of over a million Armenians who lived in the Ottoman Empire during World War One." Erdoğan said that Turkey was ready to open its archives and called on Armenia to follow suit.

With regard to the Genocide, Armenia's only expectation from Turkey is the recognition of the historical fact, and certainly not the setting up of "research commissions." Meanwhile, an overall political improvement of Armenian-Turkish relations (opening of the border, establishment of diplomatic ties etc.) can serve to mitigate tensions and pave the ground for attempts to find mutually beneficial solutions. Admittedly, the Armenian public will simply not accept any solutions until the Genocide is recognised. Complicated as the situation is, one must bear in mind that the frustration of Armenian society can only be overcome by attempts at resolving the problem, whereas efforts to hush it up are perceived by Armenians as a manifestation of hostility.

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