
CONFERENCES

Third Annual Conference of the Central Eurasian Studies Society

University of Wisconsin-Madison, October 17-20, 2002

Third Annual Conference of the Central Eurasian Studies Society was held in Madison with 103 participants. In the first day of the conference there were 10 sessions. Topics of the main sessions were international relations, social issues, medieval Eurasian history, language policy, folklore and music, geography, society and politics I, Central Asian politics. In the second day of the conference there were 13 sessions. The topics of the main sessions were international relations II, economy and law, languages of the Caucasus, Islam, culture I, education, shifting boundaries of imperial authority: war and diplomacy in the North Caucasus 1700-1859, culture II, society and politics II, modern Central Asian history, identity and international relations III.

Papers, particularly, which were presented in the international relations sessions, and Ottoman and Turkish foreign relations were interesting; since they covered a wide range of subjects such as globalization in Central Asia, Central Asian security issues, the geopolitics of the Caucasus, Russian foreign policy towards the Ottoman Empire and Turkey's policy towards Azerbaijan, Georgia and Armenia. There were also two interesting papers presented in the society and politics I and II sessions. One was presented by Lowell W. Barrington from Marquette University. He spoke about ethnic stereotypes among Russians in Kazakhstan. Erin Epstein and Charity Fain from the National Democratic Institute presented paper titled as Democracy in Central Asia. They spoke about National Democratic Institute's activities in Central Asia and Institute's experiences in the new republics.

There were three papers, which focused on the Caucasus; Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia and Turkey. One was Khatchik DerGhoukassian and Richard Giragosian's "Huntington Revisited: Ethnic Conflict, Economic Transition and Corruption in the

Caucasus". Another one was Aspet Kotchikian's "Where Worlds Collide: The Geopolitics of the Caucasus in a New World Order". Kamer Kasım from Abant İzzet Baysal University, Turkey and Institute For Armenian Research presented a paper titled "Turkey's Foreign Policy Towards Azerbaijan, Georgia and Armenia". He analyzed the importance of Turkish foreign policy to each state and the basic parameters of Turkey's relations with them. Regional alignments and the areas for cooperation and competition among the three states were also dealt with.

Third Annual Conference of the Central Eurasian Studies Society was very successful in terms of the quality of the papers presented in the conference and organization. Next year Fourth Annual Conference of the Central Eurasian Studies Society will be held in Cambridge.

ARMENIAN STUDIES WORKSHOPS AND SEMINARS IN THE TURKISH UNIVERSITIES

The Institute for Armenian Research organized workshops and seminars in some of the Turkish universities in Autumn 2002. First meeting was held at Ankara University with the participation of more than 100 lecturers from the universities of the Central Anatolia, Mediterranean and Eastern Anatolia regions. The second workshop and seminar was organized in Atatürk University, Erzurum. The participant number was about 140 in this activity. The third and fourth organizations were in İstanbul University and Bosphorus University, İstanbul, and about 300 Turkish historians and lecturers from the Marmara region universities participated it. Fourth event will be at Dokuz Eylül University, İzmir. And finally, the last meeting will be in Ankara again and the host university will be Hacettepe University. The Institute expects more than 300 historians and lecturers to these activities.

In the workshops the lecturers found opportunity to discuss the recent developments in Armenian issue and Armenian studies. They focused on methodology and newly published works on the area. Many lecturers argued that they need more materials to give the subjects regarding the Armenian studies in the courses. They also argued that a better communication is the only way to overcome the prejudices among the Turks and Armenian. The lecturers further said that the Turkish and Armenian universities should be in co-operation in all areas to give the history courses

more objectively. Another point which was pointed out by the lecturer was that the new dimensions of Armenian studies, like the cultural and economical areas, should be studies. The lecturers said that both, Turks and Armenians have focused on the most problematical issues, however a dialogue cannot be long-lasting with such a method.

In each of the meetings, the four Institute researchers gave papers on the different aspects of the Armenian studies. After the presentations the lecturers discussed the paper and the related issues. In the second day of the activity, a workshop was held and all participants discussed the methodology, sources and recent developments. The papers presented in the meetings were published and it is available from the Institute.

It will be summarized below the four papers presented in these meetings:

Historical Dimension

The paper presentations started with one made by **Şenol Kantarcı**. It is obvious that the Armenian issue originates from the interpretation of a historical fact of 1915. However to understand the 1915, other historical issues need to be examined. Otherwise, focusing only on the year 1915 in isolation could lead incorrect conclusions. **Şenol Kantarcı**'s overview of the Turkish - Armenian relations started from the beginning, pre-1064 AD period but the main concentration was the 19th century when the Armenian issue became a matter of question even in international arena. He analyzed the relation between the colonialism, expansion of the great powers and the Armenian question. He mentioned the roles played by the great powers of the time, namely France, Russia, the United States and Britain in the inception of the Armenian question. He also paid special attention to the examination of the 1915 Relocation and explained why the relocation was a necessity. **Şenol Kantarcı**, though briefly, attempted to summarize the foreign states' and Armenian lobbies' involvement in the current Turkish - Armenian relations, by analyzing the so-called resolutions brought before the US Congress as an example.

The Legal Aspect

The legal aspect of the Armenian issue has always been

neglected. **Assist. Prof. Dr. İbrahim Kaya** attempted to fill that void. He aimed to give a legal perspective to the audience, who mainly come from the background of history in order to underline the importance of interdisciplinary approach to the Armenian studies. The presentation focused its attention on both international and national legal issues such as the status of the Armenians in the Ottoman Empire, 'Genocide' as a legal term and the 1915 Relocation, international attempts for justice and the Malta deportees, Armenian issue under treaty law- the treaties of Sevres, Lausanne, Alexandropol, Moscow and Kars-, international minority rights and the Armenian community in Turkey and finally Armenian terror from a legal point of view. In such a short period, less than one and a half hours, he managed to core all the issues mentioned above, despite briefly. It is observed that the participants were very much interested in legal issues and many asked questions, which enabled **Assist Prof. Dr. İbrahim Kaya** to go deeper in some areas.

Terror, Violence and Politics

Assist. Prof. Dr. Sedat Laçiner gave the third paper. **Laçiner** in his paper focused on the thorny issues, like terror, political violence and ethnic conflicts. **Laçiner** first of all argued that the Armenian issue is not a history problem, but an issue of modern Turkey, Armenia and the diaspora Armenians. He further continued: "It is true there are real problems and obstacles before the reconciliation, but the most important problems are lack of dialogue and the strong biases in the both sides. In this regard, the most formidable problem can be considered as the Armenian diaspora's identity crisis. Confronting a cultural assimilation the Armenian institutions in the diaspora have tried to preserve the Armenian identity in the United States, Britain, Canada and elsewhere in the West. However it was a difficult job because the Armenians in the Western states were not homogenous: Some were from the Middle East, some from Caucasia, some from North Africa. That is to say, these institutions needed something to unite all the Armenians and the Jewish case provided a good example to create a new national identity. In the 1930s-1950speriod, the Armenian Church and the radical groups created the 1915 genocide legacy, and this became the most significant uniting factor among the diaspora Armenians."

Sedat Laçiner pointed out that another reason for the Armenian aggressive style in the diaspora is unsatisfied Armenian nationalism:

“Armenians lived under other nations’ rule for about 1000 years. The first independent Armenian Republic lived just a couple of years after the First World War. Now the Armenians have a fledgling state, Republic of Armenia. It gained its independence in 1991 after the collapse of the Soviet Union. However we have seen that the Armenian nationalists have no idea how states survive and how states develop. In another word they do not have a state culture, because they have never experienced a state. That is why they are mostly romantic and less pragmatic. Until now, terrorism, armed attacks and lobbying in other states were the only method to ‘persuade’ the Turks or any other enemy in order to reach their aims. Yet now they have a state and they do not know how to keep it independence forever. Ironically the independent Armenia desperately need to co-operate with the Turks in the region to be fully independent.”

Having given the source of prejudices among the Armenians, **Laçiner** criticized the Turkish side. He argued that Turkey has not give the necessary importance to its neighbors (Armenians) and the Armenian issue:

“Turkey have left the area to the radicals, and did nothing to shift the hostility trend for many decades. However now we understand that Turkey needs the Armenians as the Armenians need Turkey. The neighbors cannot live in the same region just by ignoring the problems.”

Laçiner finally talked on the Armenian terror assaults in the 1970s and 1980s. He gave a brief summary of the reasons and results of the terrorist activities. He, as a final word, pointed out that the Turkish Armenians never participated or supported the terrorist activities, and their experience should be a good example for the both sides.

International Relations Dimension

Finally, **Assist. Prof. Dr. Kâmer Kasım** talked about international relations dimension of the Armenian problem. He mentioned Armenian diaspora’s role in the Armenian problem and diaspora’s impact on Armenian foreign policy, Turkey’s relations with Armenia, countries’ approach to the Armenian problem and finally Mr. **Kasım** gave brief information about the Armenian

community in Turkey. In his speech, **Kamer Kasım**'s main aim was to emphasize international relations dimension of the Armenian problem. He, particularly, dealt with Turkey's relations with Armenia and its implications on the Armenian problem. **Kamer Kasım** argued that 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. **Kamer Kasım** also emphasized that the solution of the Karabakh problem was essential for regional cooperation in the Caucasus.

Closing Remarks

At the end of the presentations, **Ömer E. Lütem** made a closing speech. He stressed the milestones of the Armenian problem and dealt with his experiences as an ambassador. **Lütem** made comments about the future prospect of the Armenian problem.

The Armenian Issue from all Perspectives

Çankırı

20 November 2002

The governorship of Çankırı organized a panel named 'The Armenian Issue from all Perspectives' on 20 November 2002. The two members of the Armenian Research Institute, **Aydan İyigüngör** and **Şenol Kantarcı** participated at this panel.

The historian Şenol Kantarcı informed on the historical background of the Armenian issue. He focused on the direct and indirect influences of states like France, Russia, USA and Great Britain on the developments in the past. Kantarcı started with the Berlin conference in 1878, at which the Armenian issue became a political face for the first time. The Armenian issue became one of the most important things on the Ottoman agenda. The rebellions from 1878 to 1915 are explained in a detailed way by Kantarcı. A special attention has been given to the rebellions of Van in April 1915.

This background information makes it easier to understand the relocation decision of 1915. The reasons which lead to the relocation are laid open. The treaties of Sevres and Lausanne are explained after that.

A light on the international situation has been held by the second panelist **Aydan İyigüngör**. A detailed topic namely the Turkish Israeli Armenian axis has been explained by her in this connection. It is, explained how Armenia tried to get Israel on her side in her genocide allegations towards Turkey and how Armenia finally failed with this policy. Apart from this, it is explained how the Armenian issue is being used against Turkey on the international platform. Hereby a special focus has been made on Germany, who committed genocide against Jews in the history.

At the end of the panel questions of the audience have been answered by the panelists.