

# 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 AYCAŃ, 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.