

FACTS AND COMMENTS

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1. Turkish Congress on Armenian Studies

Institute 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.

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There is an article with detailed information about the Congress in this issue of the journal.¹ This issue includes also the subjects of the presentations, their authors and the full text of the declaration of the Congress.² 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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¹ See, pp. 120-122.

² 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.³

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.⁴ 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

³ See, pp. 124-126.

⁴ 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.⁵

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.⁶

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

⁵ The texts of the speeches and messages are in the documentary section of the journal.

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

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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,⁷ 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

prevent the denial of "genocide". Yet ex-Prime Minister Jospin hinted that he may take measures for the French Parliament to punish the attempts of denial of "genocide". As regarded Jean-Marie Le Pen, who made his way to the second stage of the presidential elections, he left

⁷ 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.⁸

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.⁹

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.¹⁰ It seems that he owes his position within the Republican Unity Party that gathered the supporters of De Gaulle, to Jacques Chirac, of

⁸ 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.

⁹ *Radikal*, 9 May 2002.

¹⁰ *Akşam*, 7 May 2002.

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whom he was a personal lawyer. Though Devedjian hoped for the post of the minister of justice¹² 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.¹³ 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.¹⁴

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.

¹¹ *Libération*, 8 May 2002.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Radikal*, 9 May 2002.

¹⁴ 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

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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.¹⁵

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.¹⁶

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.¹⁷

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 209.¹⁸

¹⁵ 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."

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ 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.¹⁹ 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."²⁰ At this stage nothing should be

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

²⁰ 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.

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compared with Holocaust".²¹ 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*.²²

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.²³ 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.²⁴ 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.²⁵

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."²⁶ In short, Israel confirmed its official attitude that Armenian relocation didn't

²¹ Asbarez Online, 8 February 2002.

²² Armenian Aryan Parti: Arminfo, 11 February 2002; and journalist Sasunyan: California Courier Online, 14 February 2002.

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

²⁴ Armenpress News Agency, 15 February 2002.

²⁵ Noyan Tapan News Agency, 20 February 2002.

²⁶ 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."²⁷

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.²⁸

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 1700th anniversary of Armenia's adoption of Christianity, we as Jews salute our Armenian friends and their contributions to Western society and culture."²⁹

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.³⁰

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

²⁷ *Asbarez Daily*, 13 April 2002.

²⁸ 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.

²⁹ *Azg Daily*, 7 September 2001.

³⁰ 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*.

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

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.³²

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."³³

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

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

³² *Armenian Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 2001, pp. 38,39

³³ 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."³⁴ 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.³⁵

According to press³⁶ 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 acquitted³⁷ 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.³⁸ If the parliament of Switzerland had adopted a resolution recognizing the so called Armenian genocide, the

³⁴ *Agence France Presse*, 26 March 2002.

³⁵ *Turkish Daily News*, 29 March 2002,

³⁶ *Hürriyet*, 25 May 2002.

³⁷ *Ermeni Araştırmaları*, No. 3, pp. 16, 17.

³⁸ Press Release, *Association Switzerland-Armenia*, 18 April 2002.

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consequences.

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

9- Commemoration of 24 April Activities in Various Countries

April 24th 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.³⁹ 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.⁴⁰

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

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 24th 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.

³⁹ Press Release, *Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin*, 25 April 2002.

⁴⁰ *Agence France Presse*, 24 April 2002.

⁴¹ *Reuters*, 24 April 2002.

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

prevent future genocides the Armenian "genocide" should be understood properly. President Bush was reminded also of his promises in 2000 (before election),⁴² with the consequent demand that he uses the word "genocide" this year.⁴³

Being signed by 162 members of the Congress the letter was sent to the President.⁴⁴ 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".⁴⁵ 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.

⁴² *Armenian Studies*, No. 1, pp. 39, 40.

⁴³ *Armenian Assembly of America*, Press Release, 5 March 2001.

⁴⁴ *Armenian National Committee of America*, Press Release, 15 April 2002.

⁴⁵ 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 six⁴⁶ American federated states adopted resolutions recognizing the so-called Armenian genocide.⁴⁷

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

⁴⁷ 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

We have already mentioned how easily American federated states deliver declarations and adopt resolutions concerning days of celebration upon the demands by the electorate.⁴⁸ On the other hand, houses of representatives, senates, governorates and other offices of the states can be appealed

⁴⁸ *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.⁴⁹

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",⁵⁰ and Murad Boyalilian who still is under arrest allegedly due to spying for Turkey.⁵¹ 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"⁵² 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

⁴⁹ *PanArmenian News*. 19 April 2002.

⁵⁰ *The Challenge of Statehood. Armenian Political Thinking since Independence*

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

⁵² *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.

expecting to secure an increase in aid and investments from Armenians abroad, and to get their support in the Karabakh issue. On the other hand it becomes clear that the greatest expectation of the Diaspora Armenians from Armenia is that the latter be more active in the international recognition of the

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 conference⁵³ 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,⁵⁴ though that state was destructed by a renewed Turkish aggression.⁵⁵

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.

⁵³ www.armeniadiaspora.com/conference2002/htms/declar_eng.htm

⁵⁴ 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.

⁵⁵ 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.⁵⁶

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.⁵⁷ Yet the Armenian authorities

⁵⁶ www.armeniadiaspora.com/conference2002/htms/decisions_eng.htm

⁵⁷ *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.⁵⁸ 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".⁵⁹ 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.⁶⁰

Following this meeting the ministers of foreign affairs of Turkey and Armenia had a bilateral meeting. According to one newspaper,⁶¹ 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.

⁵⁸ Ibid., pp. 34, 35.

⁵⁹ Medimax News Agency, 16 May 2002.

⁶⁰ 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.⁶² 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.⁶³ 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 10th anniversary of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization. The meeting described as "positive"⁶⁴ 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"⁶⁵ 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".⁶⁶

⁶¹ *Hürriyet*, 16 May 2002.

⁶² *Interfax*, 18 May 2002; Osbaréz Online, 20 May 2002.

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

⁶⁴ Agence France Presse 25 June, 2002

⁶⁵ Turkish Daily News, 27 June, 2002

⁶⁶ ITAR-TASS News Agency 18 July, 2002