

A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF ARMENIAN GENOCIDE RESOLUTIONS SUBMITTED TO THE AMERICAN CONGRESS AND RESOLUTION H.RES.106

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Abstract:

This article provides a critical evaluation of the resolutions submitted to US legislative institutions on the matter of the recognition of the “Armenian genocide”. It does not seek to respond to the allegations, but rather, intends to show how they have been framed since 1975 through conducting text-analysis in a comparative methodology. The article consists of two parts that is organized according to a chronology, meaning the first part deals with the resolutions targeting for the recognition of the “genocide” since 1975, while the second part is designed to provide an evaluation of five drafts that are currently on the table in both the House of Representatives and the Senate.

Key Words: Armenian genocide allegations, US Congress, H. Res. 106, Armenian question.

Introduction

Even though there is a great deal of pressure exercised by the Armenian Diaspora, one of the most important countries which has not so far recognized the “Armenian genocide” is the United States. For 30 years, the Armenians have been trying to obtain a resolution out of American legislative institutions that will acknowledge the “genocide”. Since 1975, certain members of the House of Representatives who co-operate with the Armenian lobby and a number of Senators have submitted many drafts to both the House of Representatives and the Senate in order to attain a decision that would validate the genocide allegations in the country, yet they have, so far, been unsuccessful.

The fact that Democrats won the elections for the House of Representatives in November 2006 and the House is now presided by a pro-Armenian politician, the Californian representative Nancy Pelosi, has revitalized - and could even be said to have facilitated the efforts to make the USA recognize the “Armenian genocide”. The assassination of Hrant Dink, a Turkish Armenian journalist, in January 2007 has also stimulated the Armenian lobby in the US. Currently, there are two resolutions condemning the assassination in the House of Representatives, and one in the Senate. In addition, there are two drafts aiming to achieve the acknowledgment of the “genocide”, one in Senate and one in the House of Representatives.

This article provides a critical evaluation of the resolutions submitted to US legislative institutions on the matter of the recognition of the “Armenian genocide”. It does not seek to respond to the allegations, but rather, intends to show how they have been framed since 1975 through conducting text-analysis in a comparative methodology. The article consists of two parts that is organized according to a chronology, meaning the first part deals with the resolutions targeting for the recognition of the “genocide” since 1975, while the second part is designed to provide an evaluation of five drafts that are currently on the table in both the House of Representatives and the Senate.

1. The Historical Overview of the Resolutions Concerning the “Armenian Genocide” in the USA (1975-2005)

Since 1970s, the Armenian Diaspora in the US has constantly accumulated more and more political power, which has earned it an influential role to play in both the House of Representatives and the Senate. The first resolution introduced for the acknowledgment of the “Armenian genocide” also overlaps with this time-frame since it was submitted simultaneously to both institutions by the New Jersey representative Henry Helstoski from the Democrats on 9 April 1975. The Resolution was entitled to designate “April 24 1975, as National Day of Re-

membrance of Man's Inhumanity to Man and it underlines the "genocide" the Armenians were subjected to"¹.

The reason for the introduction of the resolution by the Armenian lobby to the House of Representatives in 1975 can be expected to lay in the cool-down phase of US-Turkey relations in 1970s. During this period, Turkey allowed opium plantation in 1974 and the US imposed an arms embargo on Turkey because of the latter's peace operation in Cyprus. In 1984, another resolution was submitted by the Californian representative Anthony Coelho from the Democrats. The most important point that distinguishes this resolution from that of 1975 is that it stated the genocide was perpetrated in Turkey between 1915 and 1923². In other words, it can be treated as an attempt to associate Turkey with the "genocide" while at the same time it aimed to slander the National Struggle movement, which started to gain control Anatolia after 1919. This resolution was rejected out of the fear that it might lead to the deterioration of Turkish-American relations, which was highly undesirable because with the end of the détente period in the early 1980s, Turkey's strategic importance was appreciated once again as the US-Soviet relations were tensed again.

As the year of 1990 was declared as the 75th anniversary of the "Armenian genocide" by the Diaspora, lobbying activities in the American legislative organs were accelerated. After 1989, two new drafts to the House of Representatives and one to the Senate were introduced. One resolution handed to the House of Representatives asked the US President to declare 24 April 1989³ as the commemoration day for the "genocide", whereas the other one suggested 24 April 1990⁴ as the desired date. The draft that was submitted to the Senate had the same body with

1 For the full text of H. J. RES. 148, please see http://www.armenian-genocide.org/Affirmation.157/current_category.7/affirmation_detail.html

2 For the full text of H. J. RES. 247, please see http://www.armenian-genocide.org/Affirmation.158/current_category.7/affirmation_detail.html

3 For the full text of H. J. RES 36, 3 January 1989, please see the official website of USA House of Representatives, <http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/D?c101:1:./temp/-c1011OXkHh::>

4 For the full text of H. J. RES 417, 5 October 1989, please see the official website of USA House of Representatives, <http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/D?c101:3:./temp/-c1011OXkHh::>

that of this second resolution⁵. The one introduced to the Senate was formulated by Robert Dole, the Kansas Senator, who was expected to campaign for his candidacy for Presidency in 1992, thus who desired to win over the Armenian votes. The one submitted to the House of Representatives was initiated by Anthony Coelho and Michigan representative David Bonior, yet it failed. Another interesting point about the resolutions was the small number of co-sponsors. It did not even achieve 50, while the number of co-sponsors today exceeds 100, which can be regarded as an indicator of the unwillingness of support received by the “genocide” allegations in American legislative institutions.

One of the most important reasons why no other resolutions were introduced between 1989 and 1995 was Turkish support granted to the US during the Gulf War. However, the foundation of the pro-Armenian American Caucus⁶ in the House of Representatives in 1995 paved the way for even stronger and more organized genocide allegations. On 23 March 1995 David Bonior, this time with 180 co-sponsors, initiated another resolution entitled “Honoring the Memory of the Victims of the Armenian Genocide”, which asked the United States to encourage the Republic of Turkey to take all appropriate steps to acknowledge and commemorate the atrocity committed against the Armenian population of the Ottoman Empire from 1915 to 1923⁷. This resolution, even though it failed, bears significant importance since it is the first one that demands Turkey to acknowledge the “Armenian genocide”.

In 1996, the genocide allegations were this time reflected in a resolution related to economic issues. The resolution entitled “Foreign Operations, Export Financing, and Related Programs Appropriations Act” was accepted in the House of

5 For the full text of S. J. RES. 212, 18 October 1989, please see the official website of USA House of Representatives, <http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/D?c101:2:./temp/-c10110XkHh::>

6 This group, which is currently co-chaired by Frank Pallone, the New Jersey Representative and Joe Knollenberg, the Michigan representative, has approximately 160 members in the House of Representatives.

7 For the full text of H. CON. RES. 47, please see the official website of USA House of Representatives, <http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/D?c104:1:./temp/-c104MVphk6::>

Representatives. Its 574th part conditionalized the use of 22 millions\$ of aid spared for Turkey to her recognition of the Ottoman atrocities committed against the Armenian community between 1915 and 1923 and to undertake appropriate measures in order to honor the memory of the Armenian genocide victims. The Armenian lobby had anticipated to pressurize Turkey into recognizing the genocide since she was suffering from an economic crisis. However, Turkey refused to receive the aid under these conditions.

The resolution that had been introduced by Bonior in 1995 was then re-initiated in 1997 by the Californian representative George Radanovich who preserved the same text and submitted it to the House of Representatives⁸. This resolution's fate took after that of his precedent in failure. The same year also witnessed Carolyn Maloney, the representative of New York, who enjoyed the support of the Greek Cypriot lobby and of Guy Bilirakis, Greek-Cypriot originated representative of Florida, submitting a resolution to the House of Representatives with the title of "Commemorating the 75th anniversary of the burning of Smyrna and honoring the memory of its civilian victims, and for other purposes". Although the resolution did not adopt the word of genocide, there were references to the commemoration of the murdered Armenian and Greek clerics between 1894 and 1923, along with all Orthodox Christians who were slayed in this period⁹. Not to confine the subject of the resolution to the Armenians, but rather to expand it to all Orthodox Christians was a manoeuvre to facilitate and quicken the draft's adoption in sub-committees of the House of Representatives. Nevertheless, this resolution also failed.

By 1999, the Armenian Diaspora had concluded that it was necessary to push for the adoption of a comprehensive resolution that addressed genocide allegations. For that, a resolution entitled "USA records on Armenian Genocide resolutions"

8 For the full text of H. CON. RES. 55, 21 March 1997, please see the official website of USA House of Representatives, <http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/D?c105:1:./temp/-c105X7xYPU::>

9 For the full text of H. CON. RES. 148, 9 September 1997, please see the official website of USA House of Representatives, <http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/D?c105:4:./temp/-c10511AchS::>

was introduced on 28 April 1999 by George Radanovich to the House of Representatives. Its main body which consisted of 30 articles was almost the same with those that had been submitted earlier the same year. In its conclusion, the US President was asked to hand over all documents in the American archives that were related to the genocide issue to the International Relations Committee of the House of Representatives, to the Library of the Holocaust Commemoration Museum and to the Armenian Genocide Museum in Yerevan six months after the resolution was adopted¹⁰. Another resolution with the title of “United States Training on and Commemoration of the Armenian Genocide Resolution” that was passed to the House of Representatives on 18 November 1999 by Radanovich, also requested the President to undertake all appropriate measures to ensure that the staff of the Secretary of State and all other state officials are educated on the matter of the “Armenian genocide”¹¹. Neither resolution received approval in the House of Representatives, yet they provided the basis for further enhanced resolutions.

On 27 September 2000, Radanovich and Bonior submitted another resolution to the House of Representatives entitled “Affirmation of the United States Record on the Armenian Genocide Resolution”. Its title and the policy declaration was almost the same with that of another draft formulated the same year, except for the fact that it was constituted by 33 articles instead of 30. Three articles argued that Ottoman archives included data to confirm the “genocide”, Raphael Lemkin made reference to the “Armenian genocide” while putting forward the definition of the genocide, and that Ambassador Stuart Eizenstadt made remarks about the restoration of Armenian properties. Considering that the resolution as such would be detrimental for Turkish-American relations, the representative of Colorado, Thomas Tancredo proposed to amend the conclusion of the resolution in a way to state that Turkey could not be held responsible for the “Armenian

10 For the full text of H. RES. 155, please see the official website of USA House of Representatives, <http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/D?c106:3:./temp/-c106hBBGSh:>

11 For the full text of H. RES. 398, please see the official website of USA House of Representatives, <http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/D?c106:4:./temp/-c106hBBGSh:>

genocide” because the crime was committed by the Ottoman Empire; and this change was adopted and added to the resolution¹². The draft was passed on to the General Assembly of the House of Representatives from the sub-committees. When it was almost certain that the resolution would be adopted, President Clinton and the American Chief of Staff General Henry Shelton interfered by addressing a letter to Dennis Hastert, the Head of the House of Representatives on 19 October 2000. They jointly wished for the withdrawal of the resolution from the agenda by underlining that the US had vital interests in the region which would be affected negatively if this resolution was dealt with at that time, and it would further generate a setback on the road towards a rapprochement between Armenia and Turkey¹³. Having received these letters, Hastert dropped the draft off the agenda.

On 26 July 2002, this time the Senate witnessed another resolution introduced by New Jersey representative Robert Toricelli. In this draft, the “Armenian genocide” was suggested as an example of genocide acts, yet it also failed¹⁴. Similar resolutions were submitted to both the House of Representatives and the Senate in 2003.

In an attempt to compensate for his failure in 2000, Radanovich handed almost the same resolution with minor changes to it to the House of Representatives in 2005, but the result was not different than it was in 2000¹⁵. A similar draft that was introduced to the Senate in the same year was also defeated¹⁶. The resolution formulated by the Californian representative Adam Schiff on 29 June 2005 was

12 For the full text of H. RES. 596, please see the official website of USA House of Representatives, <http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/D?c106:1:./temp/-c106WvTFIL::>

13 “Tasarının Hikayesi”, *Zaman*, 21 October 2000.

14 For the full text of S. RES. 307 entitled “Reaffirming support of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide and anticipating the commemoration of the 15th anniversary of the enactment of the Genocide Convention Implementation Act of 1987”, please see the official website of USA House of Representatives, <http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/D?c107:1:./temp/-c1071418PB::>

15 For the full text of H. RES. 316, 14 June 2005, please see the official website of USA House of Representatives, <http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/D?c109:1:./temp/-c109nlaTv3::>

16 For the full text of S. RES. 320, 18 November 2005, please see the official website of USA House of Representatives, <http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/D?c109:2:./temp/-c1093kRhWD::>

the most comprehensive one submitted to American legislative institutions. Consisting of 46 articles, the resolution did not address only the “genocide” claims, but it also brought up issues in regard to Turkish accession to the EU, Turkish-Armenian relations, and information about non-central genocide-related subjects such as the conference held by Bilgi University on the Armenian Question¹⁷. The conclusion was also exceptionally longer than the usual resolutions (8 articles instead of 3), where the victims of the “Armenian genocide” were commemorated, Turkey was asked to accept the “genocide” crime committed by its precedent, the Ottoman Empire, to normalize her relations with Armenia. Moreover, it was stated that the Turkish bid to the EU would be underpinned only if Turkey recognizes the “Armenian genocide”, normalizes her relations with Armenia, while the EU was asked to encourage Turkey to make her undertake these changes. That resolution was not passed either.

2. Resolutions Submitted to American Legislative Institutions in 2007

After the Democrats triumphed in the last year’s elections for the House of Representatives, it was expected that issues such as troop deployment to Iraq and or a possible intervention to Iran would downplay the issue of “Armenian genocide”. However, the assassination of Hrant Dink on 19 January motivated the Armenian lobby in a way to manipulate and politicize the event so as to make the House of Representatives adopt a genocide resolution as soon as possible. Therefore, Adam Schiff, whose previous draft was not embraced in 2005, introduced a new one by the number of H. RES. 106 on 30 January 2007 to the House of Representatives. It was similar in character to H. RES. 596 which was submitted by Radanovich to the House of Representatives¹⁸. The same document was initiated in the Senate by Senator Durbin on 14 March¹⁹.

17 For the full text of H. CON. RES 195, please see the official website of USA House of Representatives, <http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/z?c109:H.CON.RES.195>:

18 For the full text of this resolution, please see the official website of USA House of Representatives <http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/D?c110:1:./temp/-c110Zg1Ez7::>

19 For the full text of S. RES. 106, please see the official website of USA House of Representatives, <http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/D?c110:2:./temp/-c110Zg1Ez7::>

In the meantime, resolutions in regard to the assassination of Hrant Dink followed each other in both House of Representatives and the Senate. In one of the resolutions submitted to the former, the wording was formulated in a way to accommodate the “Armenian genocide” in order to create a sense of an official American recognition of the “genocide”²⁰. The New York representative from the Democrats, Joseph Crowley, who put forward the resolution, discerned that the odds of his draft being adopted were low since the US had so far been insistent on refraining from using the word “genocide”. That is why he also introduced another resolution with the same title (H. R. 155) to the House of Representatives in which he deliberately omitted the “Armenian genocide”²¹.

Simultaneous to all these developments, Joseph Biden from the Democrats, who is the head of the Senate’s External Relations committee and the Senator of Delaware, submitted a similar resolution to the Senate²². Biden having recently announced his candidacy for the 2008 Presidential elections, his timing for putting forth this resolution in the Senate is remarkable since it coincides with his election campaign’s kick-off.

When the resolution is examined, it becomes clear that many demands have been requested from Turkey besides the condemnation of Hrant Dink’s assassination. Its main body entirely addresses issues related to the assassination and its aftermath. In this part, Hrant Dink is mentioned to stand for a defender of respect for human rights and freedom of press. He is also praised for attempting to break the icy air between the Turkish and the Armenian communities, and also for his newspaper *Agos* that came to represent the voice of Turkish Armenians. In ad-

20 For the full text of H. R. 102, entitled “Condemning the assassination of human rights advocate and outspoken defender of freedom of the press, Turkish-Armenian journalist Hrant Dink on January 19, 2007”, please see the official website of USA House of Representatives, <http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/D?c110:3:./temp/-c110HSVvHO::>

21 For the full text of this resolution, please see the official website of USA House of Representatives, <http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/D?c110:6:./temp/-c110HSVvHO::>

22 For the full text of S.RES 65, entitled “Condemning the murder of Turkish-Armenian journalist and human rights advocate Hrant Dink and urging the people of Turkey to honor his legacy of tolerance”, please see the official website of USA House of Representatives, <http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/D?c110:5:./temp/-c110HSVvHO::>

dition, the resolution underlines certain issues such as Dink being prosecuted for his remarks on the matter of the “Armenian genocide” according to Article 301 of the Turkish Penal Code, the Turkish population protesting his assassination on the streets in order to honor his memory, the Turkish government promising to conduct a full-scale investigation on Dink’s assassination. It is also significant that the resolution put forward in the Senate also avoids the wording of the “Armenian genocide”, as is the case with its fellow that was introduced in the House of Representatives.

The main body of the resolution is followed by the conclusion where certain demands were listed. This part is where the Senate condemned Dink’s assassination as a shameful act, expressed its full support for the Turkish government’s decision to disclose the criminals and pointed out its awareness of the fact that Turkey invited Armenian religious and political leaders to Dink’s funeral.

The most crucial part of the conclusion is Senate’s requests from Turkey, where Article 301 of the Turkish Penal Code is asked to be abolished, while bilateral relations (diplomatic, economic and political) with Armenia need to be constructed. In addition, the Turkish population was requested to honor Dink’s legacy of tolerance. These demands were without any doubt integrated into the resolution by the pressure exercised by the Armenian lobby which saw a window of opportunity in Dink’s assassination. Indeed to ask for the removal of Article 301 amounts to intervening into the domestic affairs of a sovereign independent country. To ask for the re-institutionalization of diplomatic, political and economic relations with Armenia is just one step further of requesting that Turkey opens its Armenian border. On the other hand, it is a fundamental inconsistency to first appreciate the Turkish community’s protests condemning Dink’s assassination, while asking the entire population to honor his legacy of tolerance in the conclusion.

Senator Richard Lugar objected to the declaration since it accommodated the wording of the “Armenian genocide” and succeeded in putting off the voting pro-

cedure. Given that, Joseph Biden altered the text with some changes and re-introduced it to the Committee. One of the major alterations was the replacement of the statement that Dink was prosecuted because of his remarks on the “Armenian genocide” with the clause that “his prosecution was stimulated because he had labeled the 1915 massacres as genocide”. Since the US would have recognized the “genocide” *de facto* if the first version of the resolution had been adopted, it is understandable that the wording was mitigated so as to prevent its negative implications on Turkey-US relations

3. A Detailed Analysis of the Resolution H. RES. 106

As it was mentioned above, Resolution H. RES. 106 was submitted to the House of Representatives by its six members²³ on 30 January 2007. They are the members who have actively strived for the acknowledgment of the genocide allegations in American legislative organs since the second half of 1990s. It is remarkable that Joseph Knollenberg and Frank Pallone are co-chairs of the American Caucus in the Congress, while the other three are from California where the Armenian lobby is most powerful. Even though it has not been brought to the House’s agenda yet, it is still worthy of a detailed analysis of its main articles since they accommodate major errors and prejudices.

First of all, even the first article of its main body displays serious mistakes, where it is stated that the “Armenian genocide” was designed and executed by the Ottoman Empire between 1915 and 1923. It culminated in the deportation of approximately 2,000,000 Armenians, with 1,500,000 of them died, while the residual 500,000 were kicked out of their homes in an attempt to eradicate the Armenian presence from their homeland of 2500 years.

The first mistake in that article is to assert that deportation was carried out be-

²³ These representatives are Californian Adam Schiff, George Radanovich and Brad Sherman, New Jersian Frank Pallone, Thadeus McCotter and Joseph Knollenberg from Mischigan.

tween 1915 and 1923, whereas it actually lasted till 1916 from 1915. As a matter of fact, deportation was employed only as a temporary measure that was planned to be in order until the end of World War I. Even the name of the Relocation Law implied its temporary character: Temporary Law concerning the measures to be taken by military officials against those who violated the government's practice during war-time²⁴. Moreover, relocation was froze on 25 November 1915 and was officially terminated in 1916 when the displaced Armenians were allowed to return²⁵. Therefore, it was a crucial mistake to argue that the relocation process continued until 1923. There are many reasons to believe that such an error was intentionally made in order to put the blame of the Armenian relocation on the National Struggle movement and the newly established Republic of Turkey

Secondly, the Armenians were not deported, but rather relocated. In other words, they were transferred from the region they live in to another one within the borders of the Empire. It has become a common practice to blur these two concepts of the international law. This mistake, in turn, is a further evidence that the resolution was an amateur craft.

Thirdly, it is empirically flawed to argue that the number of the relocated Armenians was 2 millions because even the total population of the Armenian community in 1910s did not reach such a volume. Though some sources account for exaggerated numbers, the volume of the Ottoman Armenian population prior to World War I ranged from 1.056.000 (British Annals) to 2.560.000 (according to Michael Leart who used the numbers offered by the Patriarchy). If we consider these two numbers as two edges of a scala, the overall population of the Armenian community could be calculated as approximately 1.800.000, which is also accepted by the Armenians²⁶. Therefore, it is not correct either to say that 2 millions Armenians were relocated. What is more, not every Armenian was relocated. The

24 This law was adopted on 27 May 1915 and entered into force after its publication in *Takvim-i Vekayi*, which was the government's official paper.

25 Gündüz Aktan, 'Devletler Hukukuna Göre Ermeni Sorunu', for the full text of the article, please see *Ermeni Sorunu: Temel Bilgi ve Belgeler*, www.eraren.org.

26 For example, the retired historian Kevork Aslan gives the same number.

Armenians who were living in Istanbul, Aydın and Edirne, and the Protestant and Catholic ones who had not participated in the committee activities were exempted from the process. Therefore, even though the number of 1.800.000 is accepted, the volume of the Armenians who were subjected to relocation was even fewer than that.

Fourthly, the claim that 1,5 million Armenian were killed is not historically sound. In order to determine the real number of the Armenian casualties, it is necessary to calculate the number of the Armenians who survived after the World War I. According to a report prepared by the British Embassy in Istanbul in 1922, 281.000 Armenians were living within Turkish borders, while the number of war-time Armenian emigrants Armenians was given as 818,873. 95.000 Armenians in turn, were those who stayed in Turkey but converted to Islam and were thus categorized under the banner of Muslims. When piled up together, these three groups amount to 1.183.873 Armenians who survived the World War I in 1922²⁷. Even if the number (1.800.000) suggested by Kevork Aslan is taken into account, the Armenian casualties during the World War I can be calculated at around 620.000. What is important here is that this number does not designate those who were murdered, but rather those who simply died. Put it differently, this data corresponds to those who died because of war-time conditions as well as out of aging, sickness and hunger. In sum, the data of 1,5 million is a number which has not been validated historically through archival inputs.

Finally, the allegation that 500.000 Armenians were relocated is also erroneous since the relocated Armenian people was granted the right to return once the World War was over and that almost 644.000 of them were testified by the Patriarchy to be living within the borders of the Empire in 1918.

The second and the third articles of the resolution suggest that Britain, France

27 NARA 867.4016/816, Kemal Çiçek, "Ermeni Yasa Tasarısı'nın İçeriği ve İddialara Verilen Cevaplar", *Ermeni Araştırmaları*, No. 23-24, 2007.

and Russia had regarded the Armenian atrocities as crimes committed against humanity, in reference to a joint declaration made by these three countries on 24 May 1915. However, it was very natural for these states to issue such a declaration since the only news they received about the “Armenian massacres” were transmitted to them by missionaries operating within Ottoman borders and also by Armenians. In addition, they were propaganda activities against the Ottoman Empire in an attempt of these three countries to appeal to their domestic constituencies. After the World War, the British exiled some prominent Ottoman officials to Malta, where they were put on trial with the charge of undertaking the “Armenian genocide”. Nevertheless, they were all released once it was realized that no sufficient evidence was existent.

The resolution’s fourth, fifth and sixth articles argue that Ottoman Empire held her own officials as responsible for the Armenian massacres and that she put them on trial where they were sentenced afterwards. In other words, some military courts which were set up after the World War found certain Ottoman officials guilty for the execution of the “Armenian genocide”. The Ottoman governments which were formed after the World War I must be treated as loyal puppets whose strings were firmly grabbed by the Great Powers and that the War Cabinets these authorities forged had to be regarded as illegal courts in terms of their form or operation. Their judgment was unfair, biased and made under pressure. This unfair and subjective characteristic of the courts was also noticed by even the Western observers. For example, the American High Commissioner Lewis Heck reported on 4 April 1919 that “most of the trials were to a large extent motivated by personal revenge or manipulation of the authorities of the Allied Powers, especially those of Britain²⁸.”

Another flaw is the seventh article where it was argued that documents to back up the “Armenian genocide” existed among the archives of the Great Powers. It is true that many documents are stored in these archives, yet almost all of them

28 NARA 867.00/868; M 353, roll 7, fr. 448, Kemal Çiçek, ‘Ermeni Yasa Tasarısı’nın İçeriği....

were deliberately created out of Armenian or missionaries' biased testimonies or forged documents. Moreover, it is not even feasible from these documents to sketch out the conclusion that Armenians were subjected to genocide. Indeed, examinations carried out among American archives about 144 Turkish prisoners in Malta did not yield any concrete results. R.G. Craigie, in his letter addressed to Lord George Curzon on 13 July 1922, stated that he could not find any hard data to constitute evidence²⁹. Likewise, the memoirs of the American ambassador to Istanbul, Henry Morgenthau, to which the resolution refers often, could not be viewed as a scientific basis for the validity of the genocide allegations, for most of the information that the book offered had been supplied by Morgenthau's Armenian-originated translator, which has shed doubts over the objectivity and precision of the book. The biased character and flaws of Morgenthau's memoirs have been subject to many historians' pieces³⁰.

Brought up in especially the 11th and 12th articles of the resolution, the activities of the civil society organizations which were established to help the Armenian community after the World War I, could not either stand for validating factors for the genocide allegations. During this period, not only Armenians, but also Turks suffered from hard living conditions and died because of insufficient health care, epidemics, hunger and under-nutrition. Between 1914-1922, Ottoman Empire lost 2,5 millions of its population while the decrease in the Muslim community of Eastern Anatolia, where relocation process was heavily felt, had been 1,5 million. Thus, these civil society organizations, in their reports, documents and photos, focused on the conditions of only the non-Muslim populations whereas they ignored the fact that Muslim communities had to go through the same circumstances.

29 Kemal Çiçek, 'Ermeni Yasa Tasarısı'nın İçeriği....

30 The first one of these works can be reserved to Heath W. Lowry's *The Story Behind Ambassador Morgenthau's Story* İstanbul, ISIS Press, 1990. In addition, for a critic of Morgenthau's comments on Germany, please see Sidney Bradshaw Fay's *The Origins of the World War*, Macmillan, London, 1966 and Harry Elmer Barnes's *The Genesis of the World War: An Introduction to the Problem of War Guilt*, New York, Knopf, 1926.

The 15th article of the resolution houses a reference to Adolf Hitler where he was quoted to say that “Who remembers what happened to the Armenians?” in an attempt to legitimize extermination of the Jews. This citation is a further proof of the general misinformation and subjectivity that pervaded the resolution. Even the Armenian historians highlight the uncertainty whether these remarks had been expressed by Hitler. On that matter, American historian Justin McCarthy’s views are crystal-clear:

“How can someone like Adolf Hitler be considered as a reliable source on Armenian history? Which of his previous statements were found to be trustworthy so that that one can be held reliable? In the political sphere, the word “Hitler” magically stands for a disastrous symbol. To quote him on the Armenian question is an effort to create speculation and to frame Turks as the precedent of the devastation that Hitler unleashed. In today’s world, nothing can be more slandering than associating our foes with Hitler. These attempts are non-sense, which are constructed good enough to fool people who do not have any clue on the subject. At the same time, this is a deliberate distortion of history”³¹.

The resolution also incorporates the idea that Raphael Lemkin’s genocide definition, which paved the way for the 1948 UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, holds reference to the “Armenian genocide”. It is possible to argue that Lemkin was influenced by the biased anti-Turkish publications in Europe when he was designing his definition. What is more, it is crucial to note that Resolution 96/1 (11 December 1946) of the UN General Assembly is said to refer to the “Armenian genocide”. Actually, in this UN document no genocide allegations were recognized, contrary to what was told in the resolution. The only decision arrived at the UN on the Armenian question is the adoption of a report entitled “Work on the Prevention of the Genocide crime and the Question of its penalization” by the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Dis-

31 Justin McCarthy, ‘Bırakın Tarihçiler Karar Versin’, for the full text of the article, please see Ermeni Sorunu: Temel Bilgi ve Belgeler, www.eraren.org

crimination and Protection of Minorities in August 1985. This report stated that the Jewish genocide was not the only genocide in the 20th century for it is possible to regard the Armenian massacres of 1915-1916 as acts of genocide. Having investigated the minutes of this meeting, retired Ambassador Pulat Tacar suggested that the overall opinion of the sub-committee on the matter of the “Armenian genocide” was to treat it as a fiercely contested issue. In short, this meeting can not be deemed as one in which the UN endorsed genocide allegations. It was at best a platform where different views were debated.

Moreover the resolution asserts that some US Presidents as Ronald Reagan and George W. Bush have, in their statements, embraced the so-called genocide allegations. While it might be correct that US Presidents have sometimes made pro-Armenian statements under the influence of the Diaspora and the lobby, it is still very hard to argue that they amounted to the acknowledgment of the so-called genocide. Indeed they have so far refrained from expressing remarks that could be highly devastating concerning Turkish-American relations. In their speeches declared on 24 April, the events of 1915-1916 have been labeled as tragedy, with a clear absence of the word genocide.

Many articles of the resolution refer to the previous resolutions that have been examined in the first part of this essay. This is done in an attempt to argue that, far from being new-borns, the views presented in that resolution are long-debated issues in the American political life, thus earning a legitimacy point for the current resolution.

Finally, the resolution points to the international recognition enjoyed by the “genocide”. However, set aside 18 states that acknowledged it as a result of propaganda, misinformation and distorted documentation, it would be extremely erroneous to argue that genocide allegations have received a worldwide acceptance.

Conclusion

Resolutions on the “Armenian genocide” allegations have been on the agenda of the US legislative institutions for the past 30 years. While in the beginning they were limited in scope in the sense of just asking for 24 April to be officially declared as the commemoration day for the “genocide”, in time they escalated to a more sophisticated level whereby resolutions demanded Turkey to recognize the so-called genocide. When investigated, it is hard to miss the point that these resolutions are documents which have been formulated within a subjective, unrealistic, empirically flawed perspective and which are far from projecting historical truths. They display every error of the Armenian lobby’s history-writing. As far as the demands laid down in the resolutions are concerned, they are no longer confined to request Turkey to acknowledge the “genocide”, but they further ask her to normalize her relations with Armenia (to restore diplomatic relations, to open the border, etc).

The timing of these resolutions generally coincides with periods when Turkish-American relations have exhibited a downward path. It is remarkable that the first resolution bringing up the Armenian issue overlapped time-wise with the commencement of an arms-embargo by the US on Turkey; and that the most recent one followed the crisis generated by the refusal of the Turkish Parliament to permit the US troops to make use of the Turkish territories in the Iraqi occupation. In addition, the Armenian lobby does not miss to exploit its opportunities when Turkey goes through hard times. Two examples can be provided: in 1996, when Turkey struggled with a heavy economic crisis, the US aids spared for Turkish use were conditionalized on Turkey’s recognition of the “genocide”; and secondly, in the beginning of this year, five resolutions were submitted just after Hrant Dink had been assassinated..

When the initiators of these resolutions are investigated, they happen to be members of the House of Representatives or Senators, mainly from New York, New Jersey and California, where big Armenian communities have been living. It is

obvious that they have been stimulated by the motive not to lose Armenian political support. Senator Robert Dole in the past and Senator Joseph Biden today have provided great assistance in order for them to win over the Armenian votes for their Presidency campaigns. In other words, these politicians have underpinned the unrealistic genocide allegations not because they had a firm belief in them, but rather because they wished to sustain their political career.

Consequently, it could be argued that the Armenian lobby has constantly gained more grounds in the US since 1975. However, Turkish-American relations still bear significant importance as far as American politicians are concerned. The Democrat Party, which currently holds the majority in the House of Representatives, is assuredly expected to triumph in 2008 Presidential elections. Since it does not possess the government responsibility at the moment, the Democrat Party can easily appeal to the support of the Armenian lobby. Nevertheless, it can be anticipated to undertake a more careful attitude vis-à-vis Turkey once the Party acquires the government. Put it differently, the government responsibility might offer a chance to eliminate the inconsistency inherent to the current policies.

