

FACTS AND COMMENTS

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In this issue, the main developments in the relations of Turkey with Armenia between September and December 2003 are handled and the recognition of the Armenian Genocide allegations in the Swiss parliament is interpreted.

DEBATES IN ARMENIA ON THE OPENING OF THE LAND BORDER

In Armenia, the debates on the normalization of relations with Turkey and opening of the land border, which we have discussed in our previous article,¹ are continuing.

The groups with ultra-right tendencies, first and foremost Tashnaks, claim that national security implications of opening the border with Turkey are not analyzed, that it is not appropriate to develop relations with Turkey without conditions; and that this surprising tolerance of the Armenian authorities leads to Turkey's imposing increasingly stricter pre-conditions upon the Armenian side.² One of the sources counts among the above-mentioned preconditions the evacuation of Karabagh by Armenia, renouncement of genocide claims and territorial demands. These are in fact the conditions of Turkey to establishing normal relations with Armenia. On the other hand, Tashnaks demand reparation, land, and recognition of the genocide allegations by Turkey in return for the development of normal relations with Armenia. The Armenian government, aware of the impossibility of agreement with Turkey in case these demands are put forward, defends establishing relations without conditions. Nevertheless, Armenia has not renounced those claims yet officially. Minister of Foreign Affairs Oskanian, stated that recognition of the so-called genocide

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¹ *Review of Armenian Studies*, Vol.1, No.4, p. 16-18.

² Armenian Policies must be based on principles of Armenian-centrism, *Yerkir*, September 5, 2003.

is to be dealt with after establishment of diplomatic relations with Turkey.³

One of the arguments of the opponents of the opening of the border is that this would be politically in favour of Turkey instead of Armenia. The pro-Huntchak media argued that Turkey has always entertained pan-Turanian aspirations to join its Central Asian cousins to build an pan-Turkic empire, and Armenia will contribute to the realization of this objective by opening the border.⁴

The claim that Armenia would prevent Turkey from uniting with Central Asian Turks was an idea proposed to assist the establishment of Great Armenia, which was envisaged during and after the First World War. It is surprising to face this view today, an idea which was not valid even in those years, and this points to the fact that Huntchaks, who failed in parliamentary elections, are so weakened that they look for help in such old fashioned demagogic ideas.

Another view is that Armenia will be a transit country not only for Turkey but also for Azerbaijan and Central Asia in case of the opening up the border. This view is theoretically correct, though it is hollow regarding contemporary realities. The eastern parts of Armenia are covered by Azerbaijan's territory and for transit passages from the Azerbaijan territory Armenia should resolve its conflicts with this country. For the railways, the conditions are different. Turkey does not have direct railway connections to Georgia or Azerbaijan. The railway goes through Kars to Armenia, and then turns north to Georgia, and south to Azerbaijan. It is connected to the Central Asian countries through Georgia by the Russian railway network. Nevertheless, Turkey has not demanded to use the Armenian railway, on the contrary, the Kars-Tbilisi railway project, which bypasses Armenia, is on the agenda.

The opening of the border became so important in Armenia that the Union of Industrialists and Businessmen of Armenia has arranged a seminar on this issue on September 17, 1987.⁵ Some of the views put forward at this seminar are summarized below:

The president of the Union, Arsen Gazarian, mentioned the closing of the border between two countries ten years ago, and

³ *Review of Armenian Studies*, Vol.1, No.4, p. 15.

⁴ Turkish Embargo of Armenia, *Armenian Mirror Spectator*, September 3, 2003.

⁵ Takings and Losses of Open Border, Economists present their outlooks, *Azg*, September 19, 2003.

argued that the businessmen in the eastern regions of Turkey demanded opening of the Armenian border from the public authorities. Moreover, Gazarian repeated the idea that Armenia was a path for Turkey to access the markets of Azerbaijan and Central Asia, and that Turkey was a path for Armenia to access the European markets. This, in turn, will reduce Armenia's dependence on Georgia.

The journalist, Tatul Manaseryan also repeated the view that Turkey had much bigger interest in the opening of the border and related this argument to the issue of development in the eastern regions of Turkey. This view is not realistic as the Turkish exports to such a small country like Armenia would be very limited and its contribution the economy of the eastern region of Turkey restricted.⁶

Harutyun Hachatrian, the vice director of the most prominent news agency of Armenia, Noyan Tapan, had pointed a fact by explaining that the opening of the border will be beneficial to Armenia since it will be a moral blow to Azerbaijan.

The Assistant Deputy Minister of Agriculture in Armenia, Samvel Avetisyan, indirectly distanced himself from those who argued that opening of border would be much more beneficial to Turkey by saying that Turkey does not really need Armenia, for the latter is a considerably small market for Turkey's large economy. *I n d e e d*, according to Armenian sources, Turkish exports to Armenia are around 20-25 million dollars.⁷ Even this export increases ten times in coming years (witch is not very likely) thanks to the opening of border; its place in the total export volume of Turkey will be less than 1%. Therefore, the contribution of the opening of border to Turkey's material profits would be negligible. In conclusion for Turkey opening of the Armenian border is not important in terms of economy, rather it is important as a step of normalization of the two countries relations.

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN TURKEY

While debates continue in Armenia, some statements of the Turkish officials affirmed the stance of the government.

⁶ See Sedat Laçiner, 'Türkiye-Ermenistan İlişkilerinde Sınır Kapsı Sorunu ve Ekonomik Boyutu', *Ermeni Araştırmaları*, No. 6, pp.35-65.

⁷ *Ermeni Araştırmaları*, No. 10, p. 18, footnote 32.

Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan during a press conference with İlham Aliyev, the Prime Minister of Azerbaijan, on September 8, 2003 said that Turkey is on the side of Azerbaijan whose lands are occupied by Armenia and she is to continue supporting all initiatives to resolve the Karabagh problem.⁸

The prime minister stated, as an answer to a question on the opening of the railway between Turkey and Armenia, that the unique credible project was the Kars-Tblisi railway connection project though it has been not realized yet, and that this project aims at accessing the Turkish republics in Central Asia.⁹ Thus, the prime minister has excluded Armenia from the plan of connecting Turkey by railway to the Caucasus and then to the Turkish republics.

On the other hand, according to Armenian sources, the prime minister has explained to the Turkish Armenian Patriarch Mesrop Mutafyan at their meeting on September 25, 2003, that although Turkey is resolving the existing problems and establishing good relations with her neighbors, the borders with Armenia will not be opened and good relations cannot be established as Armenia does not recognize the Turkish borders. He also mentioned that the painful events of the history should be left for the historians.¹⁰

The Armenian authorities preferred to give a soft response to the statement of Turkish prime minister. The Minister of Foreign Affairs, Oskanian, answering a question, stated that talk of an imminent reopening of the Turkish-Armenian border has been extremely exaggerated. 'I have never cherished great hopes in that regard' he said, adding that his upcoming meeting with Turkish Minister Gül will clarify the situation.¹¹ The official spokesman of President Kocharian, Ashot Kocharian, explained that the president supports the long awaited reopening of the Turkish-Armenian border but doubts that Ankara will agree to expatiate that soon.¹²

The Tashnaks, afraid of being left out of the agenda and rapprochement between the two countries, utilized the statements of the Prime Minister Erdoğan to criticize Turkey and the Armenians who are in favor of opening the border.

⁸ *Hürriyetim*, September 8, 2003.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Yerkır* quoting *Marmara*, September 29, 2003.

¹¹ *Asbarez*, September 16, 2003.

¹² *RFE/RL*, September 23, 2003.

Gegam Manukian, member of the Higher Committee of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation, stated that Turkey's intolerant policy towards Armenia was well-known, and that the majority of Armenians has always been aware that the ongoing isolation of Armenia will, in fact, continue and that Ankara will maintain its biased position, that the Turkish government was not ready to listen to the demands of the international community, and that it was not ready to work in the spirit of cooperation and tolerance. He added that Turkey would continue to violate human rights and international norms by constantly denying Armenian Genocide and blockading Armenia.¹³ Manukian also stated that the statement of Erdoğan should be a wake-up call for those Armenian officials who call for the immediate opening of the border, urging railway to be repaired and become ready for operation, and the border which was closed by Ankara to be reopened. It is clear that he referred to the Minister of Transportation, Andranik Manukian, who said that all preparations for the railway are completed and that Armenia was ready to start transportation with Turkey.¹⁴

As it is clear that the Tashnaks are in conflict with other members of the government also on the question of opening of the border. Their uncompromising attitude might result in their leaving the government in case the border is opened. The fact that Makarian Government has the majority even without the Tashnaks can make this development easier.

In contrast to the radical stance of Tashnaks, the statements of the Defense Minister Serj Sarkisian who is known to be close to Kocharian, that Armenia and Turkey would open the border in a few months, and there are prerequisites to think so show that Kocharian and his supporters really desire opening of the border.¹⁵

THE NEW YORK MEETING OF THE FOREIGN MINISTERS

The Minister of Foreign Affairs of the two countries made their traditional speeches in September at the meeting of the United Nations General Assembly. They also took the advantage to be in New York to arrange bilateral talks.

¹³ *Asbarez*, September 9, 2003.

¹⁴ *Panarmenian*, September 7, 2003.

¹⁵ *Golos Armenii* and *Hürriyet*.

Oskanian in his speech to the General Assembly on September 25 answered mainly to İlham Aliyev's speech criticizing Armenia on the same forum; and he skipped the relations with Turkey. However, he spoke about the so-called Armenian Genocide as: 'On another matter, important for us and for all humanity, Armenia continues to engage countries and governments around the world to recognize and condemn the first Genocide of the 20th century. The survivors of the Genocide and their descendants are helping build a democratic Armenia, committed to a future, without forgetting the past.' Judging by his entire speech, this issue was out of the topic. This gives the impression that the Armenian minister since he has always mentioned this issue in his UN General Assembly speech every year, felt obliged to do so in order to avoid criticisms especially from the Tashnaks.

Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Gül referred to the Karabagh issue in his speech, and said: 'Turkey expects Armenia to fully comply with the relevant U.N. resolutions in order to find a prompt and just solution to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. The peaceful settlement of this conflict will positively contribute to the normalization of the Turkish-Armenian relations and also to regional cooperation.'¹⁶

While the Turkish side preferred not to speak about the meeting of the two ministers, Oskanian made numerous statements about it; saying mainly that Armenia and Turkey have taken a further step towards normalizing their strained relations, there is no practical positive results to report at this point; and that they are on the right track in terms of registering progress in the bilateral relations.¹⁷ He also continued commenting on this issue after he returned to his country; and he said that there are signals from Turkey that it is willing for a positive shift in its relations with Armenia, and his impression is that Karabagh issue is no longer occupies much space in Turks' mind and is not strictly tied for normalization of Turkish-Armenian relations as it was in the past.¹⁸ Oskanian argued that the country economic programmes were not linked to the problem and the Armenian economy has already adapted to the blockade.¹⁹ According to the Tashnak media Oskanian has also

¹⁶ *Anatolian Agency*, September 26, 2003.

¹⁷ *RFE/RL*, September 26, 2003.

¹⁸ *Azg Daily*, October 7, 2003.

¹⁹ *Medimax News Agency*, October 6, 2003.

said that Turkey did not demand that Turkish territorial integrity be recognized anymore.²⁰

The attempts to belittle the border issue by arguing that it will not effect economy much, although the Armenia's desire to open the border is so clear, saying that Turkey is not interested in the Karabagh problem thus neglecting the very close Turkish-Azerbaijani relations, claiming illogically that Turkey does not demand Armenian recognition of its territorial integrity makes us think that Oskanian speaks to satisfy Armenian public opinion.

While the Armenian Minister of Foreign Affairs pretends not to credit the border issue with Turkey, the crisis that resulted President Shewardnadze resignation in Georgia, brought the border issue back on the agenda.

As the Turkish border stays closed the only land connection of Armenia to Russia and then to Europe is through Georgia. The first issue in the minds of the Armenian authorities when the events in Georgia broke out was the transit transportation through this country. President Kocharian mentioned that stability in Georgia might be helpful to avoid the possible negative consequences, particularly, the possible problems with the transit cargo transportation through Georgia,²¹ The Minister of Foreign Affairs Oskanian said also that he was very pleased since no problem has occurred in goods turnover.²² Minister of Transportation, Andranik Manukian at a speech in the parliament, expressed that the transportation though Georgia and the route to Georgia was not effected from the recent developments, but he was not sure about the future. Manukian added that 90% of Armenian trade is conducted through Batum and Poti ports of Georgia.²³ Galust Saakian from the Republican Party drew attentions to the risk created by the situation in Georgia by saying that the Armenian leadership should think about this issue and try to find alternative routes for the country's economic development. Saakian thinks that the opening of the Armenian-Turkish border has become pressing in these circumstances.²⁴ Thus, the developments in Georgia once

²⁰ *Asbarez*, October 6, 2003.

²¹ *Medimax News Agency*, November 24, 2003.

²² *Azg Daily*, November 25, 2003

²³ *Armenpress*, December 4, 2003; *RFE/RL* December 3, 2003

²⁴ *Noyan Tapan*, December 1, 2003

more revealed that opening of the border with Turkey is a priority for Armenia.

STATEMENTS ABOUT TURKEY'S POLICY TOWARDS ARMENIA

During the last three months, two statements has been made explaining the policy of turkey towards Armenia.

The first statement belongs to the President Ahmet Necdet Sezer who in his speech concerning the internal and external problems of Turkey on the occasion of the opening of the Turkish Grand National Assembly, said about the relations with Armenia: 'In accordance with its willingness to develop good relations with all its neighbours, Turkey wants to normalize her relations with Armenia. However, the realization of this goal requires that Armenia pursues a foreign policy that is consistent with the principles of good neighbourliness and international law, exerts serious effort to resolve problems with its neighbours and opts for a final choice of making peace with its past and leaving the judgment of history to historians. Should Armenia display political will in this direction, Turkey would not remain unresponsive. Such a positive development would also contribute in a concrete manner to the stability and welfare of the Southern Caucasus.'²⁵

The second statement has taken place on November 3, 2003 in the presentation of 2004 Draft Budget of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Turkish Grand National Assembly Planning and Budget Commission. The related part of the speech delivered by Mr. Gül, Minister of Foreign Affairs, is as follows: 'Turkey wants to normalize her relations with Armenia and increase cooperation in the framework of good neighbourly relations. The achievement of this aim depends on Armenia's respect for international law, her choice to make peace with its past by leaving the judgment of history to historians and her real willingness to resolve the problems with all its neighbours. In case Armenia adopts such an attitude Turkey will respond favorably and this development would also considerably contribute to the stability and welfare of the Southern Caucasus.'²⁶

The speeches of the president and the minister of foreign affairs contain the same principles of a policy towards Armenia, which could be summarized as follows:

²⁵ www.cankaya.gov.tr/tr_html/KONUSMALAR/01.10.2003-349.html

²⁶ Booklet.

The first principle is that Armenia should comply with the rules of international law. When we apply this principle to the Turkish-Armenian relations, since international treaties demarcate the borders of Turkey, it is against to the international law that Eastern Anatolia is defined as Western Armenia in Armenia's Constitutional Declaration; and in this context, it is clear that Armenia cannot demand land or reparation from Turkey. Similarly, Armenia's occupation of Karabagh, which is legally Azerbaijani territory, is also against to international law. On the other hand, that Azerbaijan accepts any possible change in the status of Karabagh is also a requirement of international law.

The second principle is that Armenia should show a real willingness or will to resolve her its conflicts with her neighbours in accordance with the principles of international law. If Armenia's policies towards Azerbaijan and Turkey are analyzed, it is understood that the main purpose of Armenia is not to resolve the problems, but to take advantage of them. For example, Armenia tries to establish diplomatic relations with Turkey, at least to open the border, without renouncing her claims for territory and reparation and without resolving the Karabagh conflict. On the other side, she tries to normalize relations with Azerbaijan and lift the embargo without withdrawing its forces from Karabagh and other Azerbaijani territory.

The third principle is that Armenia should leave the history to the historians. She has to make a final choice to be reconciled with her past, and stop considering the historical events as contemporary issues. In contrast to this principle, Armenia tries to impose to the international community that 1915 Armenian relocation, (which is wrongly known as deportation) as genocide. This policy aims to provide pressure on Turkey by accusing her with the crime of genocide and trying to create proper conditions for territorial and reparation demands. There has been almost a century after the events of 1915. After the First World War, a new international order has been established and the Turkish Republic has taken its place in this order its borders being recognized by international treaties. According to international law no border conflict related to those days can be valid today. If such a revisionist idea is accepted problems and demands of the past would be resuscitated in the Balkans, Middle East and the Caucasus; in other words, the existing international order might be questioned. The events of those years belong to history; and it's to the historians to judge and analyze them.

According to the texts mentioned above, if Armenia complies with the above mentioned principles, it is clear that Turkey will normalize the relations with Armenia in accordance with Armenia's willingness to develop good relations with all its neighbours', open its land border and establish diplomatic relations

MEETING OF MINISTERS OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS IN BRUSSELS

The ministers of foreign affairs of the two countries met in Brussels on December 5, 2003 in the framework of Euro Atlantic Association Council. According to Anatolia Agency's report on this issue²⁷ the two ministers discussed the recent situation in Georgia, stability issues in the Caucasus, development of relations of Caucasian countries with Europe and NATO and bringing more context to the activities of the Partnership for Peace

The Minister of Foreign Affairs, Abdullah Gül, stated that Ankara supported the efforts to resolve the problems that existed between Azerbaijan and Armenia and that the time was ripe for taking the necessary steps towards confidence building measures. He added that Turkey was ready to contribute to these efforts and to undertake the role of a catalyst. Gül spoke of the same issues to the Azerbaijani Minister of Foreign Affairs Guliev.

The Turkish Minister did not mention Turkish-Armenian relations. This is most probably due to the deliberative nature of the talks and the lack of tangible results. On the other hand the Armenian Minister Mr. Oskanian, during his statement to the press, focused on bilateral relations and pointed out that Brussels meeting was qualitatively different from the two previous meetings and that the parties were closer to taking the first steps. He added that although it was too soon to make clear statements, the first positive result, though small in nature, regarding the Turkish-Armenian border would be achieved in a few months time.²⁸

According to the Armenian minister, there is a possibility of opening up the Turkish-Armenian border in the coming months. The reasons of why the border is not right away opened are not explained. This is probably due to some expected developments in the near future. These developments might be related to the Karabagh issue, considering the fact that the Azerbaijani and

²⁷ *Anadolu Agency*, December 5, 2003.

²⁸ *Medimax News Agency*, December 6, 2003.

Armenian presidents accepted to start negotiation after a break of one and a half years. In this context, if the parties make progress in resolving of the Karabagh conflict Turkey might open its border in order to encourage Armenia. Such a development may create a positive atmosphere for the other problems between the two countries.

RECOGNITION OF THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE CLAIMS BY THE SWISS PARLIAMENT

The Swiss parliament recognized the Armenian Genocide claims on December 16, 2003 by a decision with 107 votes for, 67 votes against and 11 votes abstaining.²⁹

The Armenian Community of Switzerland which has a political influence not proportional to its size, with the help of some Kurdish separatist group and some Swiss politicians have tried hard in the past that the Swiss Parliament adopts a decision which recognize the so-called Armenian Genocide. The Swiss governments had not been in favor of such a decision taking into account the bilateral relations with Turkey. The attempts for a decision on that subject in 1995 and 2000 and 2001 were fruitless; the vote on December 13, 2001 was refused only with 3 votes. A motion on the same subject on March 20, 2002, signed by 115 of 201 parliamentarians, was not voted due to the government's opposition.³⁰ However, it became clear that such a decision would be adopted sooner or later since almost half of the parliament was in favor of it.

Meanwhile, the Geneva Canton had recognized Armenian Genocide allegations on December 10, 2001. The Vaux Canton adopted a similar decision on September 23, 2003. This decision is commented in some Armenian media as having symbolic value since the treaty 'dismembering Armenia' had been signed in the main city³¹ of this Canton, i.e. the city of Lausanne.

The Swiss Minister of Foreign Affairs, Micheline Calmy-Rey was to make an official visit to Turkey on October 6, and according to Swiss media other than Istanbul and Ankara she was expected to

²⁹ *Hürriyet and Vatan*, December 17, 2003.

³⁰ See, *Ermeni Araştırmaları*, No. 3, pp.13-17; No. 4, p. 19; No. 5, pp. 17-19.

³¹ *Yerkir*, September 24, 2003.

visit also 'The Kurdish Regions.³² However, Ankara cancelled the visit making out the decision of Vaux Canton.³³

While the Swiss Ministry of Foreign Affairs tried not to exaggerate the cancellation of the visit,³⁴ the media argued that Turkey has disregarded and even insulted Switzerland;³⁵ thus, an anti-Turkish atmosphere was created in the public opinion.

News that Turkish Intelligence Service informed Swiss intelligence about Foreign Minister Calmy-Rey's meeting with a high level PKK member, and that President Couchepin demanded explanation from her³⁶ resulted in the claims that Turkey spied in Switzerland.³⁷ An official investigation was initiated.³⁸ As a result, the Federal Prosecutor V. Roschacher declared that there is no evidence that a member of the federal government and a Swiss citizen of Kurdish origin are exposed to spy activity.³⁹ However, this did not change the anti-Turkish atmosphere in the media.

In these conditions, a decision recognizing the so-called Armenian Genocide by the Swiss Parliament, where half of the members supported the Armenian view, was not surprising.

The Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs made a declaration about the decision of the Swiss parliament which is stated that this decision is strongly condemned and rejected and that it is unacceptable that events which took place under the special conditions of World War I and which caused great pain to both Turks and Armenians be distorted and presented as a genocide at the hands of one party. Switzerland will bear the responsibility for the negative consequences triggered by this decision which was taken without consideration for bilateral ties.⁴⁰

³² *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, September 30, 2003.

³³ *Sabah*, October 2, 2003.

³⁴ *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, October 1, 2001 (*Swiss play down Turkish Rebuff*), *SwissInfo*, October 1, 2003. (*La Diplomatie suisse adopte un profil bas*)

³⁵ *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, September 30, 2003 (*Turkey snubs Calmy-Rey*), *Swissinfo*, October 1, 2003 (*Turkey snubs Swiss, Swiss protest about Turkey snub after Armenian genocide decision*), *Agence France Presse*, October 1, 2003 (*Turkish Cancellation of swiss trip an "affont"*)

³⁶ *Hürriyet*, October 25, 2003.

³⁷ *Swissinfo*, October 26, 2003 (*Swiss investigate alleged case of Turkish espionage, Micheline Calmy-Rey et les espions turcs, Micheline Calmy-Rey espionnée par les services turcs*), *Agence France Presse*, October 26, 2003 (*Turks spied on Swiss foreign minister over Kurd link*)

³⁸ *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, October 27, 2003 (*Swiss investigate alleged case of Turkish espionage*)

³⁹ *Agence France Presse*, October 31, 2003.

⁴⁰ www.mfa.gov.tr (*Press Releases*, No. 214, December 16, 2003)

On the other hand the Turkish Grand National Assembly by a declaration on December 22, 2003 condemned the decision of Swiss Parliament, which distorted historical facts, and evaluated that this decision as unacceptable. According this declaration Swiss Parliament decision would not contribute to searches for peace and stability in a sensitive region of the world as well as relations between Turkish and Armenian people. Parliaments should exert efforts to improve friendship and cooperation among countries and to hand over a more peaceful world to the next generations. It is among the essential duties of all the parliaments to try to create an atmosphere where mutual respect, tolerance and solidarity would prevail in a world where people of different nations live together, instead of inciting feeling of hatred between peoples in the world. Parliaments should refrain from falling into a position serving to goals of the circles that call for clashes among civilizations. Today, terrorism is the biggest threat toward the civilization. The Turkish Grand National Assembly considers that the decision of the Swiss Parliament is awarding the racist Armenian terrorism that caused lives of many innocent people and had also targeted interests of many countries including Switzerland.

In our view besides being unjust and harmful for Switzerland-Turkey relations Swiss Parliament decision may cause in the future two risks:

The first one of the risks, which is also expressed by the Union of Switzerland and Armenia,⁴¹ is that any act claiming that 1915 Relocation of the Armenians is not a genocide might from now on require punishment. A case submitted to the court by the Armenians against the Turkish associations, which stated that the events do not mean genocide, had been refused previously by the court since the Swiss Parliament did not have accepted any a decision then⁴² Such a case is not likely to be refused in courts anymore. Thus, the decision of the Swiss parliament may also restrict the right to free thought and expression in Switzerland.

The second risk is that this decision might be a precedent for other countries. The decisions recognizing Armenian Genocide allegations taken in the recent years by the parliaments of Italy and France did not influenced bilateral relations in spite of sharp Turkish protests. In case Switzerland also does not face any difficulty in her relations with Turkey, it might lead other countries to recognize the Armenian genocide claims.

⁴¹ *Association Switzerland-Armenia*, Bern, Press Release, December 16, 2003.

⁴² *Ermeni Arařtırmaları*, No. 4.