

*man Parliament resolution on the commemoration of Armenian's exile and "massacres", Turkish reaction to this resolution)*

## Key Words

*All the words of the Abstract and particularly Armenia, Armenian diaspora, Turkish-Armenian relations, genocide allegations.*

In this section titled *Facts and Comments* which is, as usual, the first article of the *Review of Armenian Studies*, we examine the major developments involving the Armenian question in Turkey and Turkey's relations with Armenia over a year, that is, from the summer of 2004 to summer of 2005. Also, we provide information about those countries, organizations and officials that have recognized the Armenian genocide allegations during that period. Furthermore, we address in detail the developments on the genocide allegations in four countries, namely, the US, France, Belgium and Germany.

## I - DEVELOPMENTS IN TURKEY

Turkey's bid for EU membership has become the main issue for the Turkish public opinion especially since the EU countries decided at their Dec. 16-17, 2004 summit to start membership talks with Turkey on Oct. 3, 2005. The Armenian genocide allegations and their potential effects on Turkey's EU accession process have been widely discussed in Turkey. The news of the grandiose commemoration activities held in Armenia and in the Diaspora to mark the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the relocation of the Armenians in 1915 reverberated through Turkey.

We give below a brief summary of the "Armenian issue-related" events that took place in Turkey in the first half of 2005.

Orhan Pamuk incident: Renowned Turkish writer Orhan Pamuk said, in an interview with a Swiss daily, *Tages-Anzeiger*, "We killed 30,000 Kurds and one million Armenians. No one dares to acknowledge that. I do." Pamuk's statement was not based on any credible evidence and it triggered widespread reactions in Turkey, drawing strong criticism from most of the people. Charges have been filed against him in an effort to make him pay compensation for defaming the state. Some argued that Pamuk had uttered these words merely to boost the sales

# FACTS AND COMMENTS

Ömer E. Lütem

Ambassador (Rtd)

## Abstract

*This article relates and comments the main developments on Armenian Question and Turkish-Armenians relations over a year, from summer 2004 to summer 2005.*

*This article is divided to four chapters.*

*Chapter I: Developments in Turkey (Reactions to Turkish novelist Orhan Pamuk, initiatives taken by People's Republican Party, Agreement of Mr. Erdoğan and Baykal on Armenian policy, Failure of Vienna Turkish-Armenian Platform, Justin McCarthy's conference in National Assembly, Commemoration of Foreign Ministry's Martyrs, Declaration of the Retired Ambassadors Group, Meeting of the National Assembly's Foreign Affairs and European Union Commissions, Speech of the President of the Republic, National Assembly's General Debate on Armenian Question, Postponement of the Boğaziçi University Conference)*

*Chapter II: Developments Concerning Turkish-Armenians Relations: Declaration of Armenian President, Prime Minister and Foreign Minister concerning Turkey, Meeting in New York of the Turkish and Armenian Foreign Ministers, September 2004, Mr. Erdoğan visit to Moscow, January 2005, Letter of the Turkish Prime Minister to the President of Armenia, April 2005, Speeches of Armenians high officials in the Conference on genocide in Yerevan, April 2005, Letter of Armenian President to the Turkish Prime Minister, April 2005)*

*Chapter III: Countries that Recognized Armenian Genocide Claim (Slovakia, Netherlands, Poland, Russia, Argentina, Uruguay recognitions and Turkish reactions), some officials and organizations that recognized the Armenian genocide claims*

*Chapter IV: Developments in Some Countries Concerning Armenian Genocide Claims (USA: President Bush message, Draft Resolution on Armenian "Genocide"; France: French Government attitude on Turkey's EU membership and the Armenian Question, Referendum on EU Constitution and Turkey's EU membership; Belgium: Belgian Senate refusal to amend the law concerning genocide denial; Germany: Ger-*

of his new book in Europe.<sup>1</sup> Some columnists accused him of angling for the Nobel Prize.<sup>2</sup> Some others defended him on the grounds of freedom of speech. Naturally, Armenians hailed Pamuk as a hero.<sup>3</sup> Pamuk said he was trying to explain that intolerance had caused so much pain in the past.<sup>4</sup> His words hardly proved effective and he has greatly lost prestige in Turkey.

Republican People's Party (CHP) took some initiatives on the Armenian question.<sup>5</sup> Party Chairman Deniz Baykal, in a speech delivered on March 1, 2005, suggested a three-stage new policy with regard to the Armenian question. At the first stage, a commission consisting of an equal number of Turkish and Armenian historians would be set up. At the second stage, not only Turkish and Armenian archives but also the archives of the other countries concerned (the US, Britain, Russia, Germany, France etc.) would be opened for research; and, finally, at the third stage, an international organization (UNESCO, for example) would keep the minutes of the researches and discussions undertaken by the commission and report them to the international community.

Another proposal advanced by the CHP concerned the "Blue Book". The Armenian genocide allegations had been put forth via three books published during and at the end of the First World War: The first one, that is, the "Treatment of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire", came to be known as the Blue Book. It was published in Britain by Viscount Bryce in 1916 at the instigation of the Foreign Office, compiled by British historian Arnold Toynbee, a rising young historian at that time. Although the claims put forth in the two subsequent books have been successfully refuted by now, nothing has been done in the case of the Blue Book which all these years has been presented as "the proof" attesting to the Armenian "genocide".

Another book, which was also published at the instigation of the British Government during the First World War on the alleged atrocities committed by German troops in Belgium, was defined as a piece of war propaganda in 1925 by the then British Foreign Secretary Sir Austin Chamberlain at the House of Lords

1 Tercüman, February 18, 2005.

2 Hürriyet, February 11, 2005, Fatih Altaylı, "Kara Yazar" [Black (Bad or Shameful) Author].

3 Hürriyet, February 27, 2005, "Ermeniler Kahraman İlan Etti", [Armenian Declare Him To Be A Hero].

4 Milliyet, February 19, 2005.

5 Radikal, March 1, 2005, Murat Yetkin: "Soykırım İçin Atak" [Offensive on the Genocide Issue].

at the request of the German government. The CHP, accepting the proposal of Istanbul Deputy Şükrü Elekdağ, a retired ambassador, decided to try to persuade the British government to acknowledge that the Blue Book too was written with the aim of disseminating wartime propaganda.

The two other books in question that have been used as reference sources for the Armenian genocide allegations are the “Ambassador Morgenthau Story” published in 1918 by Henry Morgenthau, US ambassador to the Ottoman Empire between 1913 and 1916, and “The Memoirs of Naim Bey, Turkish Official Documents Relating to the Deportations and Massacres of Armenians” published by Aram Andonian in 1920.

Professor Heat Lowry, in his book, “The Story Behind Ambassador Morgenthau Story”, revealed the falsification, mistakes and exaggerations in Morgenthau’s book. On the other hand, Şinasi Orel and Süreyya Yuca’s book published in 1983 under the title, “The Talat Pasha Telegrams: Historical Fact or Armenian Fiction?” proved that telegrams that had been attributed to Talat Pasha were in fact forgeries.

The CHP’s third initiative was to invite a prominent American scholar, Justin McCarthy, to Turkey to give a lecture on the Armenian question.

Prime Minister Erdoğan and CHP Chairman Deniz Baykal after their meeting on March 8, 2005, announced their agreement on the strategy to be followed against the Armenian allegations.<sup>6</sup>: a commission of Turkish and Armenian historians and other specialists would be set up, archives would be opened without restrictions and a letter on the “Blue Book” would be drafted and sent to the British Parliament after being signed by all members of the Turkish Grand National Assembly (TBMM). Together, the CHP and Justice and Development Party (AKP) command an overwhelming majority in the National Assembly. The agreement these two political parties have reached on the Armenian question is of great significance because it reflects a national consensus in Turkey on this particular subject.

Armenia reacted promptly to this development. Armenian Foreign Minister Vardan Oskanian said on the following day, “There is nothing that historians can

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6 CNN.com March 8, 2005.

do here, Turkey should determine its own stance on this.<sup>7</sup> The issue of the international acknowledgement of the Armenian Genocide and the Armenian-Turkish relations lie in two different planes and do not intersect. For Armenia the issue of the Genocide is not a precondition for normalization of relations with Turkey. We are always ready to dialogue with the Turkey however we will be consistent in the Genocide issue.”<sup>8</sup>

For years the Armenian Diaspora –recently with the participation of Armenia as well-- has tried to prove that relocation of the Armenians in 1915 was, in reality, a genocide. To this end, the Diaspora has spent a considerable amount of money. The foreign scholars that counter the Armenian thesis have been intimidated. Some of them have taken refuge in Turkey. Under the influence of the Armenian propaganda activities and, also, due to Turkey’s failure to demonstrate the real nature of the relocation of 1915, the public opinion in the Western countries believes that Armenians had been subjected to a genocide. As a result, Armenian activists think that they have “won the genocide war”. For this reason they now argue that there is no need for research on Armenian relocation and that there is nothing historians can do anymore. They expect Turkey to ultimately yield to the pressure exerted by other countries, especially by the EU, and acknowledge the Armenian genocide allegations. However, Armenians overlook one point: It is true that lately there has been an increase in the number of countries recognizing the Armenian “genocide” but these developments have only sharpened Turkey’s resolve to resist the Armenian claims as the Baykal-Erdoğan agreement has shown.

Another case that indicates that Armenians do not want any historical research done regarding their genocide allegations is their attitude to the Vienna Turkish-Armenian Platform (VAT), that platform was launched as a private initiative in March 2004. Using that platform as an intermediary Turkish and Armenian historians presented to one another 100 documents each in July 2004. It was planned that, at the second stage, further exchanges of documents would be carried out; later the two sides would state their views on that matter; and finally, both the documents and the views expressed would be published in book form. However, Armenians refused to take part in the second stage and the initiative was abandoned. It is not clear why Armenian historians, led by Lavrenti Barseghian, director of the Genocide Institute in Yerevan, acted in this manner. The

<sup>7</sup> Medimax News Agency, March 9, 2005.

<sup>8</sup> PanArmenian News, March 24, 2005

first possibility that comes to mind is that Armenian historians, upon studying the 100 documents delivered to them by Prof. Dr. Halaçoğlu, President of the Turkish Historical Society, realized that they did not have enough knowledge to counter them and decided to withdraw from the VAT.

Visiting Turkey at the invitation of the CHP, Prof. McCarthy gave a lecture at the TBMM on March 24, 2005 and replied to questions. With his authorisation, we publish the text of his lecture in this issue.<sup>9</sup>

The Turkish media highly praised McCarthy for his efforts, calling him a “One-Man Army”.<sup>10</sup> Indeed, McCarthy is the only prominent scholar in the US to oppose the Armenian allegations. His academic courage and integrity are commendable indeed.

McCarthy’s lecture fuelled the arguments in the Turkish press on the Armenian issue. These debates became more and more intense especially because of the Armenian activities marking the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Armenian “genocide” in various parts of the world. During this period conferences and panels were held in Turkey on the Armenian question. TV channels and radio stations aired programs in which the participants expressed clashing views. In Turkey, the Armenian issue had never been discussed so intensely and over such an extended period.

In such a climate the ceremony held on March 18, 2005 to remember the Foreign Ministry Martyrs (the Turkish diplomats slain by Armenian terrorists) with the participation of Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Abdullah Gül, gained a special significance. (The speech delivered on that occasion is attached as Document No: 1). As it is known, Armenians had resorted to violence and terror as a means of propaganda between 1973 and 1985, killing 31 Turkish diplomats and other officials. Among them were four ambassadors and four consuls general. Almost twenty years have passed since then and the impact of those events on the Turkish public is beginning to fade. Yet, Armenian terrorist activities have a very long history. For example, Armenian terrorists had attempted to assassinate Sultan Abdulhamid in 1905 and, following the First World War, they had murdered two Ottoman Grand Viziers and many other Ottoman political leaders on

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9 See the article “Armenian uprising and the Ottomans” in this issue

10 Hürriyet, March 28, 2005, Tufan Türeñç “Tek Kişilik Ordu: Justin McCarthy” [One-Man Army: Justin McCarthy].

the grounds that they had organized the relocation of the Armenians to Northern Syria although some of the victims had nothing to do with the relocation of the Armenians. On the other hand, Armenian politics has a “terrorism tradition” that targets not only Turks but also fellow Armenians. It may be remembered that during a raid on the Armenian Parliament in May 1999 gunmen killed the prime minister, the speaker of the parliament and six other deputies.

The Ankara-based Retired Ambassadors’ Group has become involved in the debates on the Armenian issue by publishing on March 25, 2005 a declaration the full text of which can be found in the Documents Section of our review.<sup>11</sup> (Document No: 2) In our opinion, this declaration is important especially because it clearly defines who is to decide whether the crime of genocide was committed. The declaration states that genocide is a crime under the International Law, that it could only be committed by real persons and not by states, that only a competent tribunal can determine whether this crime has been committed or not, and that no parliament, senate, local or municipal council, no association or any other non-competent organization can have the power to decide whether the crime of genocide has been committed or not. Thus, the declaration underlines the fact that the resolutions passed by the parliaments of a number of countries to formally recognize the Armenian genocide are baseless from the legal point of view.

The TBMM’s EU Harmonization Committee invited to its meeting at April 4, 2005 session retired ambassadors Gündüz Aktan, Ömer Lütem and Pulat Tacar, and also writer Levon Debagian and journalists Hrant Dink and Etyen Mahcupian, Turkish citizens of Armenian origin, to discuss Armenian issue related matters. As Turkish Armenians were invited to the TBMM for the first time the event has drawn a favorable reaction from the public. The publisher of an Armenian-Turkish weekly, Hrant Dink, said on that occasion, “We presented our views freely, the views that we have harbored for years and communicated to the public either in writing or verbally.” Mahcupyan, on his part, said, “I find it very positive that such a meeting has been held. I took part in the meeting and I saw that it was not organized merely for the sake of making a handsome gesture or as a show. It took place in a highly participatory atmosphere full of excitement. People gathered around the same table to discuss the question, ‘What should Turkey do in a future-oriented way?’”<sup>12</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Milliyet, March 26, 2005

<sup>12</sup> Agos, April 9, 2005.

Turkish President Ahmet Necdet Sezer participated also in the debate on Armenian issue and, in a speech delivered at the War Academies on April 7, 2005, said, “We are witnessing efforts to bring before Turkey as covert conditions many issues not directly related to our (EU) membership process. It is wrong and unjust for our European friends to press Turkey on these issues. It should be known that for us it is not possible to accept demands imposed on us, demands that lack just foundations. The claims of genocide upset and hurt the feelings of the Turkish nation. What needs to be done is to research, investigate and discuss history on the basis of documents and without prejudice. The basis of such discussions should be scientific and not political.”

The TBMM held a general debate on the Armenian allegations on April 13, 2005.

Foreign Minister Abdullah Gül delivered the first speech, summarizing the Armenian question from the past to the present. He touched on the Armenian terrorist attacks, the provisions of the UN Genocide Convention of 1948, and the activities and financial means of the Armenian Diaspora. He stated that regarding the Armenian question Turkey has, for years, followed a defensive policy, failing to do in time the archival work needed to explain the real facts to the international community. He pointed out that the funds needed for that purpose had not been allocated, and that, as a result, Turkey proves hopelessly inadequate in its efforts on this subject compared to what the Armenians have done so far. Gül said that government efforts alone would not be enough to counter successfully the Armenian allegations. All segments of the society, every individual, should take part in a joint drive to this effect.

Gül stated also that Prime Minister Erdoğan was sending an official letter to President Kocharian to suggest creation of a commission consisting of Turkish and Armenian historians and other specialists. The commission would look into the 1915 events, scanning all the relevant archives and, at the end, would report its findings to the international community. Gül said, referring to those countries that have adopted resolutions recognizing the Armenian genocide claims, “We now expect them –especially-- to encourage Armenia to accept the Turkish proposal.”

Later, Foreign Minister Gül gave information about the current state of the Turkish-Armenian relations. Explaining why “normal” relations have not been



established with Armenia, the foreign minister said, “Which country could possibly normalize its relations with a country that does not recognize its national borders?” The foreign minister pointed out also that Armenia has not complied with the UN Security Council decisions on Karabakh. He stressed that Armenia was making it impossible for Turkey to establish diplomatic relations with it -- by failing to respect the basic principles of the international law and the relevant UN Security Council decisions and by acting in ways incompatible with the spirit of goodneighborliness.

The foreign minister said that Turkey would follow a proactive policy aiming to bring light to the historical facts regarding the Armenian allegations. Turkey would go all the way in that direction, and, during that process, many countries might have to face up to their own past -- even more extensively than Turkey might have to, said the foreign minister.

The full text of the foreign minister’s speech is attached as (Document No: 3).

Şükrü Elekdağ, speaking for the main opposition CHP, said that Armenians had failed, in spite of all their efforts, to present a single valid document to prove their case over the past 90 years. He said that Armenians based their allegations mostly on a number of unauthenticated (or subjective as in the case of memoirs) documents as well as on three books that had been published with the aim of disseminating propaganda during the war. He noted that, though it has been proven that two of these (the books by Aram Andonian and Henry Morgenthau) are not “valid”, there were still those who see the third one, that is, the Blue Book, as a reliable historical document and use it in their academic studies. He underlined the need to persuade the British Parliament to admit that the Blue Book was propaganda material and, therefore, unreliable as a source. He urged all members of the TBMM to undersign a letter to be addressed to the British Parliament. At the end of the debates TBMM members signed one by one the identical letters to be sent to the House of Lords and to the House of Commons. A copy of this letter is attached (Document No: 4).

At the end of the general debate TBMM members adopted unanimously a declaration in which they expressed full support for the proposal for creation of a commission consisting of Turkish and Armenian historians, for opening of the national archives without restrictions, for carrying out similar work in the archives of the countries concerned, and finally, for reporting their findings to the

international community. The declaration further stated that, for this initiative to be successful, the support of the Armenian Government would be essential. It stressed that Turkey and Armenia should be ready to face up to their past; and that if Armenia wanted good relations and cooperation with Turkey it should accept the Turkish proposal for a joint assessment of the past. It expressed the TBMM's expectation that those countries that sincerely want the Turkish-Armenian relations to improve (especially those countries whose parliaments have passed resolutions in favor of the Armenian genocide allegations) would support this initiative. Referring to those resolutions the declaration said that the TBMM found these unseemly, meaningless, arbitrary and unfair, and therefore condemned them. It stressed that Turkey would not allow its history to be reconstructed on the basis of one-sided and misleading assessments. A copy of this letter is attached as (Document No:5).

The most important outcome of the TBMM's April 13 session is that all of the political parties represented at the Parliament embraced the new policy designed vis-à-vis Armenia and the Armenian allegations.

In the mid May the Turkish media reported that a large-scale academic conference would be held at Istanbul's Bogazici University on May 25-27, 2005 with the participation of more than fifty people. The conference was titled "Ottoman Armenians during the Fall of the Empire: Scientific Responsibility and Democracy Problems".<sup>13</sup> The large majority of the participants were Turkish scholars that had already adopted the Armenian allegations of genocide. None of the Turkish scholars that maintain that the relocation of 1915 was not a genocide was invited. The organizers were obviously trying to leave out those that oppose the Armenian theses. Besides, although genocide is a concept defined by the international law, it was seen that the conference was not going to discuss the relocation of Armenians according to the international law. Thirdly, only a group of pre-determined guests would be allowed to enter the conference hall. Those who had not been invited would not be able to participate.

The news that such a conference was going to be held caused an outcry at the TBMM. Istanbul deputy Şükrü Elekdağ during his speech in this subject said that all of the scholars invited to speak at the conference had, in the past, either defended the Armenian genocide allegations or questioned the validity of the Turkish official theses. Elekdağ said that not even a single historian or specialist

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<sup>13</sup> Hye-Tert, May 18, 2005.

was invited to the conference to defend or explain Turkey's views. He expressed his conviction that the conference was singularly intended to promote the Armenian propaganda drive. Minister of Justice Cemil Çiçek, speaking in the name of the government, said, with reference to the TBMM's April 13 session, that the government and the opposition had joined hands, taking the decision to work together to counter the "genocide slander" being committed against the Turkish nation. The attempt to stage the aforementioned conference at a time the necessary steps were being taken to translate into action the government-opposition agreement, amounted to "stabbing these efforts in the back", he said. He stressed on the other hand that universities being autonomous bodies did not mean that universities would act irresponsibly. A day later Bogazici University issued a statement, announcing that the conference was postponed.

The point which needs to be emphasized on that subject is that, in accordance with freedom of expression, it was legally not possible to prevent such a conference. The minister of justice himself had openly stated that the government did not have the power to prevent the conference.

The postponement of the conference triggered massive negative comments in the Turkish media. The minister of justice, especially, was heavily criticized for using the expression "stabbing in the back". The media criticism focused on the scope of the freedom of expression in Turkey while the Armenian issue was pushed into the background.

The organizers and would-be participants of the conference issued a statement<sup>14</sup> on May 27, telling the public that they had to postpone the event because they were faced with pressure, threats and slandering. The conference would be held in near future, they added. However, it has still not taken place and no explanation has been given about this delay.

## II - TURKEY-ARMENIA RELATIONS

Some negative developments in Turkey-Armenia relations were observed during the nearly one-year period that we are studying.

Although the foreign ministers of Turkey and Armenia have had talks for some time, they have not agreed on any of the issues at stake. Russian opposition to

<sup>14</sup> Hürriyet, May 27, 2005.

the Turkish efforts to help resolve the Karabakh problem, especially, has made a negative impact on Turkish-Armenian relations. These relations have been adversely affected also by the pressure put on Turkey --especially by the Armenian Diaspora—to force Turkey to acknowledge the “genocide” prior to the EU accession talks and to open its border with Armenia. Another negative factor was the commemoration of the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the alleged Armenian genocide which turned into an anti-Turkey campaign. Turkish and Armenian foreign ministers met twice over the past year but they have not met since September 2004. Prime Minister Erdoğan’s April 2005 proposal for a joint commission of historians that would look into the genocide allegations has not yielded any tangible result – for the time being.

In what constituted the first negative development in bilateral relations during the period in question, Armenian President Robert Kocharian refrained from taking part in the NATO summit held in Istanbul on June 29, 2004. Since the NATO Summit had nothing to do with Turkish-Armenian relations, it is a strong possibility that President Kocharian was acting in response to a request he may have received from President Putin of the Russian Federation who was also not attending the conference.

Russia does not want Turkey to contribute to efforts aimed at solving the Karabakh problem obviously because it fears that his own role in the region would be diminished. As a matter of fact, right after NATO’s Istanbul Summit, during Armenian Foreign Minister Oskanian’s visit to Moscow, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov accused Turkey of trying to “bypass” Russia by taking a primary role towards resolution of the Azerbaijan-Armenia conflict. He said that Russia was in a position to guarantee a peace formula that would be acceptable to both parties and he reminded that Russia was Armenia’s main military ally in the Caucasus region.<sup>15</sup>

Addressing the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe<sup>16</sup> on June 24, 2004, Armenian President Kocharian touched on his country’s relations with Turkey. He said that memories of the past –in the context of which he referred to “the genocide”, its “consequences” and “no show of repentance”—were casting a shadow on bilateral relations. He said that Turkey worsened the situation further by imposing an embargo on Armenia. He said that basically two things should

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<sup>15</sup> Armenpress, June 14, 2004

<sup>16</sup> Armenpress, June 24, 2004

be done to break the deadlock: Firstly, the meetings on the issues inherited from the past should be held at various levels and should not interact; secondly, the Turkey-Armenia relations should not be linked to relations with a third country (Azerbaijan). Kocharian also stated that if preconditions were to be put forth, that would kill the positive expectations.

These rather ambiguous expressions can be “deciphered” in the following manner: Obviously, the Armenian president continues to accuse Turkey of committing genocide. He wants that the consequences (territorial demands and compensation payments) of the “genocide” should be tackled. He believes that Turkey should apologize to the Armenians for the “genocide” and that Turkey should end the economic embargo on Armenia. He would not object to the Armenian Diaspora and Armenian NGOs holding direct talks with Turkey but he warns that these talks should not affect the official contacts and meetings between the two countries. Furthermore, he wants Turkey to stop supporting Azerbaijan. He also wants Turkey to normalize its relations with Armenia without setting any preconditions for that. In other words he wants Turkey to stop demanding that Armenia end its occupation of Karabakh and other Azerbaijani territories, and that Armenia drop its genocide allegations and recognize Turkey’s territorial integrity and the inviolability of Turkey’s national borders.

Armenian Prime Minister Andranik Markarian, during a meeting with the members of the press in the late May 2004<sup>17</sup>, said that [Armenian] territorial claims on Turkey was not an item on Armenia’s foreign policy agenda. He said that Armenia was striving to establish diplomatic relations with Turkey without any preconditions, and that the problematic issues could be taken up later. He said that ensuring international acknowledgement of the Armenian “genocide” and obtaining territory from Turkey as compensation would become possible only after building a powerful state in Armenia. He pointed out that if Armenia wanted territorial compensation, there would be no need to articulate that everywhere in a loud voice. These words clearly indicate that Armenia is indeed making territorial claims on Turkey. To fulfill this aspiration the Armenian prime minister pins his hopes on his country getting stronger one day.

According to the Armenian prime minister, establishment of relations with Turkey without any preconditions should definitely be the top priority issue. In other words, the Armenian prime minister wants to establish diplomatic relations

<sup>17</sup> Arminfo, May 26 2004

with Turkey -- without renouncing the genocide allegations and territorial claims, and without withdrawing the Armenian forces from Karabakh and other Azerbaijani territories. Naturally, once diplomatic relations are established, border gates would be opened and Armenia would be able to conduct its foreign trade via Turkey. Resolution of its problems with Turkey would create a certain climate of confidence in which Armenia would attract larger amounts of foreign capital and receive more financial aid from the United States and the European Union. Having gained the necessary strength, Armenia would then put on the agenda such issues as the Armenian territorial and compensation claims on Turkey and the demand that Turkey recognize the so-called Armenian genocide.

One could easily conclude that Armenia's policy vis-à-vis Turkey will follow such a path in the long run. The first step of that policy as stated many times by Foreign Minister Oskanian is the establishment of normal relations with Turkey without any preconditions. The following steps of the Armenian policy were unveiled by Prime Minister Markarian's above mentioned speech.

The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) presidency rotates annually. Each year a member country is elected to that position unanimously and the country to hold office is determined some time in advance. It seems that Turkey has been approached for OSCE presidency for 2007 and accepted it.

Armenian Foreign Minister Oskanian, during a lecture delivered at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) in Washington on June 14, 2004, said, in response to a question, that Turkey was the sole candidate for OSCE presidency for 2007. He went on to say, however, that Turkey has followed an unbalanced policy in the region (the Caucasus) in the last 12 years, giving Azerbaijan unequivocal support. He argued that Armenia would not allow a country that has not yet established diplomatic relations with Armenia to assume the presidency of an organization that is carrying out negotiations on the Karabakh conflict. He pointed out that Armenia has veto powers over the election of the OSCE president -- which it would use. Oskanian hinted that if they were to receive something in return for their cooperation, they might agree not to veto Turkey's OSCE presidency for the year in question. Obviously what he implies is the establishment of diplomatic relations with Armenia and the opening of the Turkish-Armenian border gate.

In reply to a question on this subject, Foreign Minister Abdullah Gül said

that Armenian “veto” was not an issue. OSCE presidency is a task that involves a heavy agenda and, since a general election would be held in Turkey in 2007, the Turkish authorities felt they would not be able to devote to the OSCE affairs the time required, he said.<sup>18</sup> Thus, Turkey refused to accept the Armenian blackmail. It demonstrated clearly that, for the time being, it is not in favor of opening its borders with Armenia and/or establishing diplomatic relations with it. However, by doing this, it had to give up an important international position: such as the OSCE presidency.

Turkey had submitted its application for OSCE presidency in 1999 as well. At that time, Armenia’s newly elected President Kocharian, who was conducting an aggressive policy against Turkey, announced that he would veto Turkey’s candidacy. Then Turkey hinted that it might veto any proposal to stage the OSCE meeting in a city other than Istanbul. Armenia came under pressure from Western countries, the US especially, and it altered its stance. As a result, Turkey was elected OSCE president and Kocharian attended the OSCE meeting in Istanbul. We notice that this time Turkey has decided not to adopt the same approach.

As we mentioned above, just as President Putin, Armenian President Kocharian did not attend the NATO Summit in Istanbul. In reply to a question on this issue, Prime Minister Erdoğan said that Turkey was striving to solve its problems with its neighbors and that Turkey always acted with a “win-win” mentality. He stated that Turkey did not want to break its ties with Armenia but “if Armenia is running away we would run after it only up to a certain point.” He said that tackling the “genocide issue” would not yield any results. That was a task for historians. The important thing was to build the world of future, he stressed.<sup>19</sup>

Armenian Foreign Minister Oskanian represented his country at NATO’s Istanbul Summit on June 29, 2004. In his speech he said that Turkey was a natural bridge between the Caucasus and Europe and the only NATO member country that had a common border with the Caucasian countries. He pointed out that the Caucasus was included in Europe’s “New Neighborhood Initiative” and that Armenia’s access to Europe would be via Turkey. For development of “genuine relations of neighborhood” in the Caucasus Turkey should normalize its relations with Armenia. He stressed that that would make an immeasurably positive im-

<sup>18</sup> Anatolia News Agency, July 17, 2004.

<sup>19</sup> Milliyet, June 26, 2003.

pact on the Karabakh issue.<sup>20</sup>

Oskanian, in an interview with an Armenian newspaper<sup>21</sup>, said that Turkey greatly desired to improve its relations with Armenia but lacked the political will needed for that. He reiterated that Armenia wanted to normalize its relations with Turkey without any preconditions. He argued that Armenia did not need Turkey, that the Armenian economy continued to develop despite the embargo, and that improvement of relations with Turkey was not a matter of life and death for Armenia. He said that they just wanted to be on good terms with the neighboring countries. He stated that there was no obstacle to the establishment of normal relations with Turkey. He did not refer however to the serious problems that exist between the two countries such as the Armenian genocide allegations, Armenia's failure to recognize the Turkish borders and Armenia's occupation of Karabagh and other Azerbaijan territories. It is worth mentioning that these problems prevented up to now establishment of normal relations between the two countries.

Referring to the Gül-Oskanian meeting, a Turkish newspaper<sup>22</sup> wrote that Oskanian raised the border gates issue. Gül, in turn, reportedly said that Armenia should stop making "genocide" allegations that bother the Turkish public and renounce its territorial claims on Turkey – claims cited in the Armenian Constitution as well.

From the statements<sup>23</sup> the foreign ministers of Turkey, Azerbaijan and Armenia made to the press together, it can be deduce that the ministers exchanged views on NATO and EU expansion and on Karabakh during their three-way meeting.

In conclusion, we can say that the bilateral and three-way talks held during the NATO Summit of June 2004 brought about no real change in the respective stances of these countries. Yet, it was a positive development in that they decided to hold further meetings especially on a three-way basis. However, no such a meeting has been held since then.

As has become a custom that the foreign ministers of Turkey and Armenia took advantage of their stay in New York to participate in the UN General Assembly,

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20 Press Statement of Armenian Foreign Ministry, June 29, 2004.

21 Haykakan Zhamanak, July 1, 2004.

22 Hürriyet, June 29, 2004.

23 Armenpress and Azertag, June 28, 2004.



to have a bilateral meeting. After that meeting the Turkish foreign minister told the press they explored bilateral issues as well as regional concerns<sup>24</sup> and that the Armenian foreign minister gave information about the talks he had held with his Azerbaijani counterpart. He said that he, in turn, told the Armenian foreign minister that Turkey would continue to serve as a catalyst between the two sides.<sup>25</sup> Armenian Foreign Ministry spokesman, on the other hand, told the press that the two ministers discussed the possibility of reopening the border gates between the two countries.<sup>26</sup>

In the speeches they made at the UN General Assembly in September 2004, the foreign ministers of Turkey and Armenia both touched on Karabakh without referring to the Turkey Armenia relations.

Although nearly a year has passed since the New York meeting, the two foreign ministers have not met again. Considering the fact that they had met four times in the 14-month period preceding the last meeting, one could say the relations between the two countries are stagnant to say the least.

During Prime Minister Erdoğan's visit to the Russian Federation in January 2005, issues related to Armenia were brought up. In a speech he made during the visit, President Putin said they were aware of the problem that existed between Turkey and Armenia. He said Russia would do its best to solve the problems inherited from the former Soviet Union. They were ready to act as an intermediary and a guarantor to help solve the problem. Prime Minister Erdoğan said they would display solidarity with Russia towards finding a solution to the problems existing with Armenia. He emphasized that Turkey's Armenia policy was based on solution-seeking. He criticized the Armenian position of refusing to recognize the Treaty of Kars of 1921 which established the borderline between the two countries. He said that because of Armenia's negative attitude Turkey was not opening the land transportation routes yet. Complaining about the way Armenia maintains an anti-Turkey stance, he said, "We want to overcome the problems with Armenia. We want our relations to flourish in all areas. There are opportunities especially in commercial matters. Armenia is the only neighbor we have that stays angry with us. We do not want an angry neighbor."<sup>27</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Armenialiberty, September 29, 2004.

<sup>25</sup> Yeni Şafak, September 28, 2004

<sup>26</sup> armenialiberty, September 29, 2004.

<sup>27</sup> Vatan, January 12, 2005

Since Armenian recognition of the Treaty of Kars would mean that Armenia recognizes Turkey's existing borders, in other words, Turkey's territorial integrity, this has been a major issue between the two countries. In an interview with a Turkish daily (*Zaman*)<sup>28</sup>, Oskanian said, commenting on Prime Minister Erdogan's words regarding the Treaty of Kars, that Armenian leaders "have made no statements saying we don't recognize it. We are the successor states of the Soviet Union. All of the agreements, which the Soviet Union signed, continue to be in force unless new agreements have been signed to replace them, or unless statements have been made about not recognizing those agreements."

Armenian Foreign Minister's words are true from the international law angle. However, it is quite possible that the Armenian Minister is not talking sincerely. *Zaman*, the daily that carried out the interview, asked a high-level Turkish Foreign Ministry official to comment on Oskanian's words regarding the Treaty of Kars. The official pointed out that Armenia's Declaration of Independence refers to Turkey's eastern provinces as "Western Armenia" and that Turkey's Mount Ararat is Armenia's national emblem. This is a situation that does not make sense. On one hand Armenia recognizes Turkey's borders. On the other hand it considers Turkey's eastern provinces Armenian territory. To officially recognize Turkey's border, Armenia needs to make a written statements to this effect and then change the relevant article of its Independence Declaration and its emblem.

Significantly, during the interview Oskanian said he did not think Turkish-Russian cooperation would contribute to the resolution of the Turkey-Armenia conflict. He said, "...I don't think that these countries' cooperation will foster conflict's settlement." So, in spite of its very close relations with Russia, Armenia is not willing to accept Russia's offer to be an intermediary or a guarantor in this conflict. Armenia, which gets support against Turkey from many Western countries, could be feeling that it does not need Russia at this stage.

Referring to the "genocide" issue, Oskanian said, "On the Armenian foreign policy agenda, there is no reference to territories or compensation. Our foreign policy goal is international recognition of the Armenian Genocide." He said that, for normalization of the relations between Turkey and Armenia, "We have never said that Turkey" should first acknowledge "the Genocide." He went on to say, "There are two important problems between Armenia and Turkey: opening the border, and Genocide... The EU, too, would like for Turkey to recognize the gen-

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28 *Zaman*, January 25, 2005

ocide at some stage in the process. We hope that these matters will be included in the agenda for negotiations between Turkey and the EU to begin later this year.”

Just after the TBMM debated the Armenian problem on April 13, 2005, Turkey has undertaken a new initiative to solve its problems with Armenia. Prime Minister Erdoğan sent a letter to President Kocharian, suggesting that the two countries should be “forming a group comprised of the historians and other specialists of our two countries to investigate the developments and events related to the 1915 period by researching all relevant archives and to report their findings to the international community.” Erdoğan said in his letter, “I believe that an initiative will serve as a step towards the normalization of relations between two countries.” Erdoğan’s letter to Kocharian is attached as (Document No: 6).

President Kocharian, in an interview with RTR Russia TV, “confirmed he had recently received a letter from the Turkish Prime Minister, but added that the letter did not contain much that would help tackle the problems between the two countries. According to the TV channel Kocharian said, “We’re not talking about material compensation, it is a moral issue, the issue of the material consequences is not discussed at state level.”<sup>29</sup>

From the Armenian president’s words, it is possible to conclude that Armenia would not demand compensation if Turkey recognized the so-called genocide, that only the people concerned (those who were subjected to relocation) might have that right. Since there had been no “State of Armenia” in 1915-1916, even theoretically Armenia would not have the right to demand compensation from Turkey. Legaly, the Treaty of Lausanne has already determined how individuals’ claims regarding both movable assets and real estate would be resolved. Here, it must be pointed out that for almost all of these claims the statute of limitations expired long time ago anyway.

Armenian Parliament Speaker Artur Bagdasarian has said that on the “genocide” issue, “all the discussions are completed and there is no need for additional consideration.”<sup>30</sup>

Speaking at a press conference, Prime Minister Andranik Markarian, referring to the commission suggested by Turkey, said, “If the commission is to decide whether or not there was a genocide, then I am against it. I myself is a descendant of a genocide victim... If we manage to ensure that Turkey establishes diplomatic

<sup>29</sup> Agence France Presse, April 23, 2005.

<sup>30</sup> Pan Armenian News, April 15, 2005.

relations and opens its border with Armenia and creates an environment in which they could discuss all problems, that would constitute progress and a victory.”<sup>31</sup>

Foreign Minister Oskanian, in an interview on that subject with a Turkish channel (NTV), said, referring to the Turkish Prime Minister’s letter, that in reality that proposal had “existed” for years. He also stated that their answer to it has always been the same. They would not discuss the reality of genocide with anybody, at least not at the government level. However, they were open to dialogue.<sup>32</sup>

A spokesman for the Dashnak party said, “acceptance of the Turkish proposal would amount to questioning the genocide.”

Shavarsh Kocharian, an opposition member, said that the Turkish proposal “...is aimed at easing the European Union’s growing pressure on Turkey” to face its “troubled past.”<sup>33</sup>

The Turkish proposal has drawn negative reactions from the Armenian Diaspora as well. Harout Mardirossian, President of the Committee of Defense of the Armenian Cause, an organization with Dashnak tendencies, said that the Turkish proposal was a ridiculous effort to deny the “genocide”. He maintained that the “Armenian Genocide” was an incontestable fact and that its “reality” was non-negotiable.<sup>34</sup>

On April 25, that is, immediately after the events commemorating the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the alleged Armenian genocide, President Kocharian sent his reply letter to Prime Minister Erdoğan. (The full text of the Kocharian letter is attached as (Document: 7).

In short, Prime Minister Erdoğan had suggested that a group of Turkish and Armenian historians should investigate the events of the 1915 period by scanning the entire body of relevant archival material and report their findings to the international community. In his reply letter, Kocharian did not deal with this proposition directly. However, the expressions he used in the letter indicate

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31 RFE/RL, April 18, 2005.

32 NTV, April 21, 2005

33 Asbarez, April 15, 2005

34 Agence France Presse, April 14, 2005

that he does not favor that proposal. He says, for example, “Governments are responsible for development of bilateral relations and we do not have the right to delegate historians” and that the Turkish Prime Minister’s proposal “does not refer to the present and the future.” Furthermore, Kocharian repeats the well-known Armenian position for the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries without preconditions. Clearly, there is no accord on this issue between the views of the two sides. However, Kocharian has preferred not to close the door altogether. He has suggested that “...an intergovernmental commission may be formed to discuss any issue or issues available between our countries aiming at solving them and coming to mutual understanding.”

Armenians believe that “genocide” has been adequately proven, and that Turkey too will have to acknowledge the “genocide” at a not-too-distant future due to the pressure exerted by other countries. They are convinced that once that happens the time will come for them to discuss the consequences of that acknowledgement (compensation and territorial claims). Erdoğan’s proposal which amounted to saying, “Let us investigate together whether the 1915 events were a genocide,” goes against the Armenians’ convictions. Therefore, although they wanted to reject it, they did not dare to refuse a proposal supported by that a number of great powers such as the US and Germany and the majority of the members of the European Parliament and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. That is why in the last sentence of his letter Kocharian suggests an “intergovernmental commission” in what seems to be an attempt to soften the negative attitude he showed in the beginning of this letter.

Erdoğan and Kocharian had been expected to have a talk during the Council of Europe summit in Warsaw – though, later, it became clear that no such meeting had actually been planned. In a speech he made at the summit meeting, Kocharian made an unwarranted reference to the “genocide” issue. He said, “...the efforts to internationally recognize the Armenian Genocide are conditioned by the faith in European values. We are grateful to the states that supported...”<sup>35</sup>

Prime Minister Erdoğan had an adverse reaction to this speech. He held a press conference to warn those countries that supported Yerevan. He pointed out that the TBMM too could pass genocide resolutions against certain countries. On the other hand, in his speech at the summit meeting he drew attention to the fact that Turkey has opened its archives, and urged Armenia and other states to fol-

35 AZG Armenian Daily, May 18, 2005

low suit.<sup>36</sup> He stated that historians, legal experts and politicians needed to look into the archives and that one could reach a conclusion only on the basis of the outcome of such research.<sup>37</sup> He went on to say: "I do not find it right, either in terms of human rights or in terms of the supremacy of the law, that interested or disinterested parliaments adopt such resolutions through some simple lobbying activities without basing themselves on documents or information."

Addressing the AKP parliamentary group meeting on his return home, the prime minister said, "...in some countries' parliaments decisions to accept the Armenian genocide were made after they were lobbied. Such decisions without using any documents or information are not supported by any solid evidence; such decisions have been made in the parliaments of 15 countries so far. Among them are countries that have committed genocide themselves. We will make similar decisions regarding their past after studying the documents. We will take this step."<sup>38</sup>

In conclusion, the scholarly study that Prime Minister Erdoğan tried to initiate by sending a letter to President Kocharian has not taken place so far.

### **III - COUNTRIES, ORGANIZATIONS AND OFFICIALS THAT RECOGNIZE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE ALLEGATIONS**

During the period we have studied, the parliaments of Slovakia, the Netherlands and Poland adopted resolutions that confirm the Armenian genocide allegations. The resolution of the German Parliament which will be dealt separately amounts to a formal recognition of the Armenian Genocide allegations. Furthermore, the resolutions adopted formerly on that subject by Belgium, the Russian Federation, Argentina and Lebanon, have been reiterated. Also, regional parliaments in some countries took similar resolution and the statesmen of certain countries declared that they recognized the past seven months (November 2005-June 2005) Armenian genocide claims. In short, saw a more extensive recognition of the Armenian genocide allegations than any other previous period.

This phenomenon was caused mainly by two factors: Firstly, on the occasion of the commemoration of the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the "Armenian genocide", both

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<sup>36</sup> Zaman, April 18, 2005.

<sup>37</sup> NTV Channel, May 18, 2005.

<sup>38</sup> TNA Parliament Bureau, May 19, 2005.

Armenia and the Armenian Diaspora pushed their efforts to the maximum to gain recognition from some countries. Secondly, due to the EU decision to start accession talks with Turkey in October 2005 a number of countries began to use the Armenian genocide allegations for a variety of purposes: some of them are having a reckoning with their own past, some are trying to prevent Turkey's EU membership and some others are trying to exact concessions from Turkey during the EU accession process. The fact that the approval of each and every EU member is needed during the negotiation process Turkey has adopted a cautious approach vis-à-vis those EU countries that have recognized the genocide allegations.

The resolution of the parliaments that have recognized the Armenian genocide allegations will be examined in chronological order:

### **Slovakia**

The Slovak Parliament took the following decision regarding the so-called Armenian genocide on November 30, 2004: "The Slovak Parliament recognizes the genocide of Armenians in 1915 during which hundreds of thousands of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire were killed and considers this act a crime against humanity."<sup>39</sup>

At first sight the reasons for the decision of the Slovak Parliament were not clear. Slovakia does not have a sizeable Armenian community or a close relationship with Armenia. Only in the light of certain historical events that the reasons for the Slovakia Parliament's resolution can be understood.

When the Nazis invaded Czechoslovakia on March 15, 1939, they annexed to Germany under the name "Protectorate of Bohemia" the region where the Czechs lived. On the same day, a so-called "independent" state of Slovakia was founded. Slovakia pursued the same policies as the Nazis. In this framework, the over 80,000 Jews in the country were deprived of their civic rights and most of them were ultimately sent to the Auschwitz concentration camp in Poland on the other side of the border where they were exterminated. The Russian Army occupied Slovakia towards the end of 1944 and the "Czech" and "Slovak" regions were reunited and the state of Czechoslovakia re-established. The Soviets urged Czechoslovakia, their new ally, to expel from the country the German population

<sup>39</sup> Agence France Presse, December 2, 2004.

that had lived there for centuries. Accordingly, millions of ethnic Germans living in the Sudetenland and Carpathian regions were expelled to Germany under extremely difficult conditions.

During the Soviet Union's disintegration process, Slovakia became an independent state once again with the support it received from Germany. Well aware of the fact that due to the maltreatment of the Jews and Germans in the past Slovakia would not be accepted as a respectable country by the fellow Europeans, the Slovak Parliament adopted two resolutions in a row, presenting a formal apology to the Jews in December 1990 and to the Carpathian Germans two months later.

Since then Slovakia has been (or tries to give the impression that it is) very sensitive to on human rights issues. Therefore, the Slovak Parliament adopted with relative ease a resolution that recognizes the Armenian genocide claims. Obviously, they were convinced that Turkey, an aspiring member of the EU, would not have a strong reaction to that.

The Turkish Foreign Ministry issued a statement<sup>40</sup> on December 2, 2005, condemning the decision taken by the Slovak Parliament. The Ministry stressed that it was not among the duties and responsibilities of national parliaments to pass judgment on the controversial periods in the history of other nations. It pointed out that taking such a decision by distorting the events for self-interest would not be compatible with responsible behavior - at a time there is a need to leave to the future generations a legacy of friendship and tolerance rather than hatred.

### **The Netherlands**

On December 21, 2004, the Dutch Parliament adopted a resolution in which it asked the Dutch Government "to bring up the recognition of the Armenian Genocide continuously and expressly in the dialogue with Turkey."<sup>41</sup>

The Dutch decision was met with astonishment in Turkey since, two days ear-

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40 [www.mfa.gov.tr/MFA\\_tr/BasinEnformasyon](http://www.mfa.gov.tr/MFA_tr/BasinEnformasyon) <http://www.devletim.com/git.asp?id=390/Aciklamalar/2004/Aralik/> December 2, 2004.

41 Press Release, Federation of Armenian Organizations in the Netherlands (FAON), 24 April Committee, December 21, 2004.



lier, the Netherlands, the term president of the EU, had played an important role at the European Summit in bringing about the EU decision to start the accession talks with Turkey.

The reasons for the Dutch decision are not so obvious. Before everything else, it must not be forgotten that the Netherlands has a very active and well-organized Armenian community that has ample financial resources. However, since the Dutch Armenian community is small they could hardly wield the kind of power needed to elicit a decision from the Dutch Parliament. It would have been impossible for them to exert a financial influence on all members of the Dutch Parliament anyway. We could assume that the Dutch deputies acted in that manner because, due to intense Armenian propaganda, they sincerely believed that Armenians had been subjected to genocide. However, in that case it would be difficult to explain why do the Dutch parliamentarians fail to display a similar interest in the massacres their neighbors the Belgians had committed in Congo and the French in Algeria. Why do they fail to ponder on their own colonial past from this particular perspective? Why do they insist on portraying as genocide the relocation of a group of people due to security concerns -- in a country far away from the Netherlands nearly a century ago?

The only plausible explanation seems to be the one that concerns the presence in the Netherlands of a large community of migrant workers and their families. Their integration problem has not been solved. The average Dutch citizen is upset by the presence of these workers and their families. If Turkey became a member of the EU that would increase the number of Turks in the Netherlands. It seems that, the conservatives in the country are trying to prevent such a development. The Dutch government, as EU term president, is well aware that without Turkey's contribution the EU would not be able to carry out its Middle East and the Caucasus policies in the future. Therefore, on one hand the Dutch government made efforts to ensure that accession talks with Turkey would be started. On the other hand, it did not do anything to prevent the Dutch Parliament from taking a resolution regarding the Armenian "genocide", a decision that will render all the more difficult the Turkey-EU talks. Thus, the Dutch government has devised a temporary solution by adopting a double-standard approach to a difficult subject.

## **Poland**

The Polish Parliament unanimously passed the following resolution on April 19, 2005: "The Parliament of the Polish Republic pays tribute to the victims of

the genocide of the Armenian population in Turkey during World War One. The remembrance and the condemnation of this crime remains a moral duty of the whole mankind, of all the States as well as all the willingly people”<sup>42</sup>

The resolution adopted by the Polish Parliament drew a very strong reaction from Turkey. The Foreign Ministry, in a statement published on the following day<sup>43</sup>, “condemned and rejected this resolution stating that it is an irresponsible behavior to portray those events as genocide, and that the soundest decisions about historical events could only be made by historians. The statement said that it was with this consideration that Turkey had suggested to *Armenia* creation of a group of historians and other specialists of the two countries to look into the developments and events related to the 1915 period. The group would research all relevant archival material and report its findings to the international community. The statement said, “It hurt the Turkish people’s feelings deeply when the Polish Parliament, instead of advising the Armenian government to accept our historic proposal, passed a resolution based on falsified information regarding the events of 1915. The Polish Parliament’s behavior is not compatible with the spirit of friendship that evolved between the peoples of Turkey and Poland over a period of eight hundred years.”

The Foreign Ministry statement was strong-worded indeed. The Turkish Press as well severely criticized the Polish resolution and a number of NGOs denounced Poland. Turkish Parliament Speaker Bülent Arınç sent a letter to his Polish counterpart condemning the resolution. The planned visit to Turkey of the Polish-Turkish Inter-parliamentary Friendship Group and the visit of the Polish Parliament’s Foreign Relations Committee Chairman were cancelled. The Turkish Parliament decided not to send a representative to the “parliamentary marathon and semi-marathon” to be held in Poland.<sup>44</sup>

The strong Turkish reaction is due to the fact that the Turkish public always had a highly positive image of Poland. Throughout their history Turkey and Poland had faced a common enemy: Russia. The Ottoman Empire had refused to agree to the partition of Poland between Russia and Prussia. Therefore, when the Polish Parliament passed –on an issue on which Turkey has been highly sensitized– a resolution that reflects the Armenian views, the Turkish people saw that as sort of

42 European Armenian Federation For Justice and Democracy, Press Release, April 21, 2005.

43 [http://www.mfa.gov.tr/MFA\\_tr/BasinEnformasyon/Aciklamalar/2005/Nisan/NO6520Nisan2005.htm](http://www.mfa.gov.tr/MFA_tr/BasinEnformasyon/Aciklamalar/2005/Nisan/NO6520Nisan2005.htm)

44 *cnntürk*, 27 Nisan 2005

betrayal. Here, it must be noted that the Turks' warm feelings towards the Polish people are obviously not reciprocated. For Poland, Turkey is not "special". The memory of the Russo-Ottoman wars and the Ottoman refusal to agree to the partition of Poland has faded. Even if, at that time, the Polish people harbored warm feelings towards the Turks, these must have evaporated during the Soviet era.

Why did the Polish Parliament adopt that resolution? As all the other formerly communist countries that are EU members, Poland is an over-zealous advocate of human rights probably to compensate for its own shortcomings. Also, Germany, Poland's old-enemy that is now a friend and protector, may have played a role in this development by making certain suggestions. Finally, Polish Parliamentarians may have thought that since Poland has the right to veto Turkey's EU accession process, Turkey would not be in a position to display a strong reaction. However, the Turkish reaction has been quite severe and bilateral relations have suffered from the Polish Parliament's move.

### **Russia**

The Russian Federation has the world's largest concentration of Diaspora Armenians. Furthermore, Armenia is Russia's only ally in the Caucasus. Russia has military bases in Armenia and Russian military units guard Armenia's borders. Armenia has gained extra significance for Russia following the regime change in Georgia.

On April 14, 1995 the Russian State Duma had passed a resolution recognizing the so-called Armenian genocide due to the pressure exerted by the Armenians living in Russia and, also, because of Russia's special relationship with Armenia. The operative part of it is as follows<sup>45</sup>: "The State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation condemns the perpetrators of the extermination of Armenians from 1915 to 1922; expresses its deep sympathy to the Armenian people and recognizes April 24 as a day of remembrance for the victims of the Genocide."

The Duma passed a new resolution<sup>46</sup> on April 22, 2005 with 310 votes. No one abstained or voted against the draft. The Duma was most probably encouraged by the adoption of a series of similar resolutions in other countries. The

<sup>45</sup> [www.armenian-genocide.org/Affirmation.151/current\\_ca.../affirmation\\_detail.htm](http://www.armenian-genocide.org/Affirmation.151/current_ca.../affirmation_detail.htm)

<sup>46</sup> ITAR-TASS News Agency, April 22, 2005.

resolution is as follows: “The State Duma of the Russian Federation pays tribute to the sister Armenian people on the occasion of 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the start of the Armenian genocide, which is one of the most cruel and tragic events of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The deputies of the State Duma fully denounce the act of genocide committed against the Armenian people. The Duma believes that the entire international community should commemorate the 90th anniversary.”

The Turkish Foreign Ministry responded by delivering a diplomatic note to Russia in protest, stressing how unfortunate it was that, instead of supporting Turkey’s well-intentioned initiatives on this issue, Russia had taken a decision of that kind.<sup>47</sup> The Ministry issued a statement<sup>48</sup> as well in which it denounced and rejected the resolution passed by the Duma. Noting that relations between Turkey and Russia had made significant progress in all fields, the Ministry pointed out that the step taken by the Duma was not compatible with the level bilateral relations had reached. The Ministry expressed Turkey’s conviction that historians could take the soundest decision on this subject. It was for that purpose that Turkey had taken the initiative to have Turkish and Armenian historians shed light on the facts -- by studying the material in the archives of the third countries concerned as well. The Ministry went on to say that the Duma’s decision was unfortunate also from the standpoint of peace and stability in the region and development of good neighborly relations.

While the Duma takes such decisions regarding the history of other countries, it somehow refrains from making any reference at all to Russia’s own bloody history. Yet, the memory of so many incidents is still fresh in minds: The Russian Army during the Russo-Ottoman War of 1878 helped the Bulgarians to become the predominant ethnic group in the Ottoman provinces which correspond roughly to today’s Bulgaria by carrying out an ethnic cleansing campaign against the Turks and other Muslims living in those provinces. At around the same time the Russians organized pogroms against the Russian Jews and thus forced a sizeable part of them into exile. The Russians quelled the 1905 revolts with a bloodbath. The Communist regime in the thirties deliberately abandoned peasants to death by starvation because they were resisting the forcible collectivization of agriculture, thus causing millions of them to perish. Under the Gulag system,

<sup>47</sup> Zaman, April 28, 2004

<sup>48</sup> [http://www.mfa.gov.tr/MFA\\_tr/BasinEnformasyon/Aciklamalar/2005/Nisan/NO67\\_26Nisan2005.htm](http://www.mfa.gov.tr/MFA_tr/BasinEnformasyon/Aciklamalar/2005/Nisan/NO67_26Nisan2005.htm)

opposition members were exiled to the remotest parts of the country where they were forced to live under primitive conditions. Incalculable numbers of people were exiled and/or died during the 1936-1939 period that came to be called the Great Terror. Many peoples –Crimean Tartars and Meshketian Turks among them-- were exiled from their lands to other regions. Prior to and during the Second World War large-scale massacres were committed in the Baltic countries and in Poland, especially. In the post-war period, freedom movements were ruthlessly suppressed in Hungary and Czechoslovakia. It is almost a case of black humor that a country with so much blood and human tragedy in its own past comes up and accuses others of committing genocide.

### **Argentina**

While there is no sizeable Turkish community in Argentina, the country has an Armenian Diaspora consisting mostly of people that had migrated from the Ottoman Empire. Over the years, the Armenian Diaspora has become affluent and influential to a certain extent. In fact, in 1993 it managed to elicit from the Argentinean Senate a resolution in favor of the commemoration of the “Armenian Genocide”. Since the war in Karabakh was still continuing at that time, the resolution expressed concern over the human rights violations allegedly being committed against the Armenian people there.

New resolutions basically similar to the 1993 decision were adopted in 2003 and 2004.

The resolution --passed on April 20, 2005-- pays tribute to the Armenian “genocide” victims, expresses solidarity with their families, and condemns the Turkish Government for systematically denying “the events that were incontestably documented by various offices of the Turkish Government.”

The Turkish Foreign Ministry issued a statement on May 5, 2005 denouncing and rejecting the Argentinean Senate’s accusation that Turkey had committed genocide against the Armenian people. It said, “It is obvious that the attitude of the Argentinean Senate is politically motivated.” Adopting a text “which lacks historical truth” and is “full of mistakes”, was an “irresponsible act,” it added. The Ministry noted that Turkey had offered to create, together with Armenia, a mixed group that would investigate the events of the 1915 period by scanning all relevant archives and report its findings to the international community. Those countries that sincerely wanted normalization of the Turkey-Armenia relations

should support the Turkish initiative. Those that acted otherwise, passing such resolutions, were serving no useful purpose, merely letting themselves to be an instrument for bad-intentioned efforts.

### Uruguay

Uruguay too has a small but influential Armenian community.

Uruguay was the first country to adopt a parliamentary resolution recognizing the Armenian genocide claims. The Chamber of Representatives and the Senate of Uruguay made April 24 the “Day of Remembrance for the Armenian Martyrs” by passing a bill to this effect on April 20, 1965. That decision was reiterated in 2004, that is, four decades later.<sup>49</sup>

In the latest instance, the Chamber of Representatives adopted on May 3, 2005 a resolution in which they asked the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to “carry through the United Nations the initiatives” needed to have April 24 declared as the “Denunciation and Repudiation of all Forms of Genocide Day”.<sup>50</sup>

We can say that Uruguay’s initiative hardly stands a chance, and if one day the United Nations decides to determine a specific date for condemnation of the acts of genocide, it would base that decision on the Holocaust.

During the period we have studied, senior officials of a number of countries have announced they recognize the “Armenian genocide”. Since the parliaments or governments of the countries concerned have not confirmed these statements so far, the views expressed have to be of a “personal” nature. Nevertheless, the fact that no objections have been raised against these statements may be a clue indicating that these countries too may be inclined to recognize the so-called Armenian genocide if conditions become ripe for it in the future.

During that period, the first official that recognized Armenian genocide claims was President Mohammed Khatami of Iran. During an official visit to Armenia in September 2004, Khatami paid tribute to the “victims of the 1915 genocide” and laid a wreath at the Genocide Memorial in Yerevan.<sup>51</sup>

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49 [http://www.armenian-genocide.org/Affirmation.282.current\\_ca.../affirmation\\_detail.htm](http://www.armenian-genocide.org/Affirmation.282.current_ca.../affirmation_detail.htm)

50 Oriental Republic of Uruguay, Parliament – Chamber of Representatives, Press Release, No.2854, May 3, 2005.

51 Asbarez, September 9, 2004.

Lately, Iran has been following a policy of rapprochement towards Armenia especially since the Greater Middle East project was put forth and the US established good relations with Georgia and Azerbaijan. Khatami's trip to Armenia and his visit to the Genocide Memorial should be assessed in this framework. On the other hand, Khatami obviously has not taken into consideration the fact that his visit to the Genocide Memorial would make Turkey uncomfortable.

Bulgarian President Georgi Parvanov, during a visit to Armenia, went to the Genocide Memorial on October 6, 2004. Accompanied by his wife, he laid wreaths at the memorial and planted a spruce tree in memory of the "genocide" victims. It would be impossible to think that the Bulgarian President is not aware of Turkey's sensitivities regarding the genocide allegations. Having secured NATO membership, Bulgarian officials are not attaching as much importance to Turkey as they did in the past. Bulgaria may recognize the so-called Armenian genocide after becoming a full member of the EU.

Arnold Ruutel, President of Estonia, during an official visit to Armenia in November 2004, gave a lecture at the university of Yerevan. Asked to comment on the "Armenian genocide committed in Turkey in 1915", Ruutel said, "It is right that the injustice done to the people of Armenia should be recognized and condemned."

When asked by a journalist why he or other Estonian leaders had not said so before, Ruutel said that before Estonia joined the EU the situation in the country had been tense and Estonia did not want to become involved in other crises at that time. He went on to say, (having become a full member of the EU), "Now Estonia is on solid ground, it has the strength to issue clear statements on its positions."

Although the Estonian president clearly accepted the Armenian allegations, the Estonian Parliament and Foreign Ministry remain silent on this issue for the time being. This stance may be related to the fact that Turkey spent a great deal of effort to ensure that Estonia would gain NATO membership. Since Estonia has become a NATO member, it does not need Turkey's help anymore. On the contrary, now Turkey is seeking Estonia's (and, for that matter, all the other member countries') support in the course of its EU membership process.

Why does Estonia display such interest in the Armenian genocide allegations?

According to one source,<sup>52</sup> “Having suffered from Soviet violence, Estonia is feeling it has under a moral obligation to fight for human rights and against crimes against humanity.” On the other hand, Estonia is expecting that Russia should apologize for the atrocities of Soviet period.

Lithuania’s Minister of National Defense Gediminas Kirkilas, on a visit to Armenia in April 2005, also went to the Genocide Memorial in Yerevan. Stating that acts of genocide should be denounced and measures should be taken to prevent further acts of his kind, the minister said that although no official proposal was being made for the recognition of the so-called Armenian genocide in Lithuania at present, “he believes that the recognition of the Armenian Genocide by Lithuania would be right.”<sup>53</sup>

On the other hand, NATO Secretary-General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer and former president of the European Commission Romano Prodi refrained, during their visit to Armenia, from commenting on the genocide allegations. In reply to a question on this issue, the NATO secretary-general said, “NATO is not going to exert any pressure on Turkey. In the whole, NATO stands aside of any question filled with hatred and bearing racial context. Between NATO and Turkey, there are close relations of cooperation.”<sup>54</sup>

A number of international and regional organizations and regional parliaments too have recognized the Armenian allegations. At the top of the list is the World Council of Churches. This religious organization in which the Protestant and Orthodox Churches are members but not the Catholic Church, had, in a resolution it had taken in 1983, complained about the “silence of the world community and the deliberate efforts to deny historical facts” in the face of the “tragic massacre of one-and-half million Armenians in Turkey and the deportation of another half million from this historic homeland at the beginning of this century.” In the following years, the World Council of Churches continued to issue similar resolution. To mark the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the so-called Armenian genocide, the World Council of Churches issued a statement, saying, “The World Council of Churches has on different occasions addressed the need for public recognition of the Armenian Genocide and the necessity of Turkey to deal with this dark part of its history,” and “... propose to all member churches to make Sunday April 24 a

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52 Same source.

53 Yerkir, April 6, 2005.

54 Grassroot News, November 16, 2004.



day of memorial of the Armenian Genocide.”<sup>55</sup>

The US-based Jewish Defense League too has recognized the so-called Armenian genocide allegations. The Union of American Hebrew Congregations, another Jewish organization, had recognized the Armenian genocide allegations<sup>56</sup> in 1989. Although both of them are important Jewish organizations, they do not represent the entire Jewish community in the US. There are other Jewish organizations that subscribe to the opposite view and make efforts to ensure that the US Congress would not acknowledge the genocide allegations. Meanwhile, the Israeli Government rejects the Armenian genocide allegations – on the grounds that the Holocaust was a unique kind of phenomenon.

This year, a bill recognizing the Armenian Genocide allegations was passed in Kansas<sup>57</sup>, bringing up the number of the American states that accept the genocide allegations to 37. These states are listed in the footnote.<sup>58</sup> The American States can take a decision of this kind without engaging in extensive research -- as long as part of the voters seek it and they are not outnumbered by another group of voters who oppose it. The resolution taken by the individual states in the US are not legally binding on the US Administration or the US Congress.

#### **IV – THE STANCE TAKEN BY CERTAIN COUNTRIES REGARDING THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE CLAIMS**

During the period we have studied, certain developments involving the Armenian genocide allegations were observed in a number of countries.

In the US, though President Bush did not use the word “genocide” in his April 24 speech, he did use certain expressions that almost meant the same thing. Meanwhile, a bill envisaging recognition of the “genocide” was presented to the US House of Representatives.

<sup>55</sup> Press Release Catholicosate of Cilicia, February 21, 2005.

<sup>56</sup> California Courier Online, March 8, 2005.

<sup>57</sup> Armenian Assembly of America Press Release, April 29, 2005.

<sup>58</sup> Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Illinois, Kansas, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Tennessee, Utah, Vermont, Virginia, Washington, Wisconsin.

In France, the political parties which are against Turkish membership to EU, added the Armenian question to their arguments against Turkish membership. The French government has announced that it would raise the Armenian issue during the accession talks with Turkey. Furthermore, a bill has been presented to Parliament with the aim of making it a crime in France to negate the Armenian genocide ever happened.

The Belgian Senate killed an attempt to expand the scope of a law enacted in 1995 which makes it a crime to deny in the Armenian Genocide”.

The German Parliament adopted a resolution accepting the Armenian genocide allegations though the text did not include the word “genocide”.

Detailed information is given below on the developments that took place in four countries.

### **United States of America**

This year, President Bush’s April 24 message gained an extra importance since it was the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the so-called Armenian genocide. The Armenian lobby had hoped that the President would use the word “genocide” this time because of Washington’s discontent over the anti-American stance and statements of certain Turkish figures. Some 220 Congressmen sent a letter to President Bush, urging him to act in that way. That figure had been 191 last year. There are 550 representatives and 100 senators in the US Congress. Although a record number of representatives and senators have taken the initiative in favor of the Armenians this year, they still accounted for no more than one-third of the total number of representatives and senators. In other words, the Armenian lobby could not rally an adequate number of members of Congress to influence the President this year either.

The President did not use the word “genocide” in his April 24 message this year. Furthermore, unlike last year, the President did not use the word “annihilation”<sup>59</sup> in his speech. However, he used expressions such as “the most horrible tragedy”, “mass killings”, and “terrible events” to describe the 1915 incidents. The President used the word “great calamity” in place of “Metz yegern”, in the Armenian language an expression which describes the “genocide”. In short, the

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59 Review of Armenian Studies, Vol.2 No:6 2004, P.16

President did not use the word “genocide” so as not to offend the Turks and he tried to please the Armenians by using expressions that connote the word “genocide”. His speech did not draw any comments from the Turkish and Armenian governments.

The Turkish media saw as a favorable development the fact that the President did not use the word “genocide”. The Armenian media was moderately disappointed. However, Aram Hamparian, the Executive Director of the biggest Armenian organization in the US, that is, the Dashnak Armenian National Committee of America, claimed, “This statement is a fresh attempt to help the government of Turkey continue its shameful policy of denying the crime against humanity.”<sup>60</sup> Bryan Ardouny, the Executive Director of Armenian Assembly of America, an organization that represents those Armenians that have more moderate views, said that he was “extremely dissatisfied with the President’s characterization of the attempted annihilation of our people” and that the President had used “evasive terminology which only serves to support Turkey’s state-sponsored denial campaign.”<sup>61</sup>

As in previous years, President Bush praised Armenia in his message, saying, “The US is grateful to Armenia’s contributions to the war on terror and to efforts to build a democratic and peaceful Iraq.” It was not clear how Armenia contributed to the war on terror. Armenia dispatched a team of 46 of doctors and engineers.<sup>62</sup> It is not easy to understand how such a small group would contribute to the building of a democratic and peaceful Iraq.

President Bush touched on the scholarly studies regarding Turkish-Armenian problems as well. He said, “I applaud those individuals in Armenia and Turkey who have sought to examine the historical events of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century with honesty and sensitivity.” It is not clear who these individuals are. The only meeting between Turks and Armenian scholars regarding historical research was the Turkish-Armenian Vienna Platform in which ceased its activities when the Armenian historians refused to take part in it any longer. The praise coming from President Bush may be a sign indicating that he favors continuation of such researches.

Secondly, President Bush said, “the analysis by the International Center for

<sup>60</sup> RFE/RL, April 25, 2005.

<sup>61</sup> Armenian Assembly of America Press Release, April 25, 2005

<sup>62</sup> Caucaz.com, Georgia, January 18, 2005

Transitional Justice (ICTJ) did not provide the final word, yet marked a significant step toward reconciliation.” The ICTJ is a US-based private organization for legal studies. Turkish-Armenian Reconciliation Commission (TARC) had asked the ICTJ whether the UN Genocide Convention of 1948 could be applied to the events of 1915. The ICTJ, in a report drafted on the subject, said that the 1948 Convention could not be applied retroactively and, therefore, there was no legal ground for territorial demands on or compensation from Turkey. However, the ICTJ also volunteered an answer to a question that had not been posed to it. It said that if it had been possible to implement the 1948 Convention retroactively, the relocation of 1915 would have been classified as genocide. At the end, neither the Turkish nor the Armenian members of the TARC were satisfied with the ICTJ report. The report has almost come to be forgotten by now since a report of a private organization such as the ICTJ would not be binding and, also, because the Reconciliation Commission ceased to exist.

Why did the US President refer to a report prepared by this little-known organization? The first thing that comes to mind is that the US administration may be thinking that the formula mentioned in that report would enable Turkey and Armenia to eliminate their differences. The formula in question was that the 1915 events would be recognized as genocide but no territory or cash compensation would be demanded from Turkey. Although Armenia might accept such a solution, the Armenian Diaspora, dominated by the Dashnaks, would insist on getting compensation and territory. Since Turkey rejects the genocide allegations altogether, this formula does not stand a chance.

Here is another significant aspect of President Bush’s message. The president said, “Prime Minister Erdoğan’s proposal for a joint Turkish-Armenian commission can help advance these processes” of reconciliation between the two countries. Prime Minister Erdoğan had called for a commission that would conduct historical research – whereas President Bush did not mention any specific task for the commission, leaving the door open for discussions on all issues. That is more in line with the Armenian position.

On June 14, 2005 a draft Armenian genocide resolution was presented to the House of Representatives by Congressmen Frank Pallone and Joe Knollenberg, co-chairmen of the Congressional Caucus on Armenian Issues<sup>63</sup> and some fifty other members of Congress including George Radanovich and Adam Schiff who

<sup>63</sup> Caucus means a group formed by a number of US Congressmen to promote the interests of a group or a country.

have always defended Armenian interests. The resolution was titled, “The Affirmation of the United States Record on the Armenian Genocide”. The authors of the resolution said that the text was quite similar to the draft that had been presented to the Congress in 1999<sup>64</sup>. The 1999 draft had been debated at congressional committees but was dropped from the agenda in October 2000 upon the written request of President Bill Clinton.

The new draft resolution, in the section titled “Findings”, lists 30 articles that summarize what the US has done up to now regarding the Armenian “genocide”. That document is too long to be quoted here in detail. It would be enough to mention the contents of the first article to give an idea about the overall draft. Article One states that the “Armenian Genocide” was “committed by the Ottoman Empire” from 1915 to 1923, resulting in the “deportation” of some 2,000,000 Armenians of whom 1,500,000 died and the 500,000 survivors were sent into exile “bringing to an end the over 2,500-year Armenian presence in their historic homeland”. Needless to say that those figures are gross exaggerations.

The operative part of the Resolution is as follows:

“The House of Representatives

1) Calls upon the President to ensure that the foreign policy of the United States reflects appropriate understanding and sensitivity concerning issues related to human rights, ethnic cleansing, and genocide documented in the United States record relating to the Armenian Genocide and the consequences of the failure to realize a just resolution;

2) Calls upon the President in the President's annual message commemorating the Armenian Genocide issued on or about April 24 to accurately characterize the systematic and deliberate annihilation of 1,500,000 Armenians as genocide and to recall the proud history of United States intervention in opposition to the Armenian Genocide.”

Does this resolution stand a chance of getting accepted? If President Bush, a Republican himself, did not want it, the Congress, dominated by Republicans, would hardly be prepared to adopt the draft. We think that the stance President

<sup>64</sup> For the full text of the draft resolution please refer to: Armenian National Committee of America (ANCA) Press Release, June 14, 2005.

Bush will take on this issue will depend on the nature of the Turkish-American relations. In other words, the President would most probably take into consideration the extent to which the US demands from Turkey would be met.

### **France**

During the local elections and, especially, the European Parliament elections held in France in 2004, it became evident that rightwing and center French political parties were against Turkish membership in the EU. However, President Chirac stated that if the EU Commission report turned out to be favorable for Turkey, accession talks with Turkey should begin. He added that the talks would continue for a very long time and that Turkish membership was not a current issue.

Some 5 million Muslims live in France, most of them Arabs of North African origin. Generally speaking, the Muslim community in France is poorly educated, has a high crime rate and has not been integrated into the French society, causing a certain uneasiness among the French. The Turkish bid for EU membership had drawn no sizeable adverse reaction from the French until the 2004 elections when the French began to put the Turks into the same category as the North African Muslims. In the end, the rightwing and center parties opposed Turkey's EU membership. Meanwhile, the Socialist Party, in principle, continued to support Turkey's membership bid but linked it to improvements regarding human rights, democratic practices and the issue of Armenian "genocide" Since Turkey rejects the "genocide" allegations, the Socialist Party too should in reality be seen as a party that opposes Turkey's EU membership.

The French government has supported Turkey's EU membership in spite of the opposition coming from those political parties which participate in the government. This must be due partly to the stance taken by President Chirac. The President obviously believes that it would be impossible to back off from the decisions taken about Turkey at EU Summit Meetings. However, in France opposition to Turkey's EU membership has grown to such an extent that on Dec. 13, that is, a few days prior to the European Summit, Foreign Minister Michel Barnier announced that during the accession talks with Turkey, France will ask Turkey to recognize "the tragedy that took place in Turkey at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and affected the lives of hundreds of thousands of Armenians." He pointed out that for more than 50 years the European integration project has been based on the idea of reconciliation. He cited as an example the French-German reconciliation. He said, "I believe that when the time comes Turkey should come to terms with its past, be reconciled with its own history and recognize

this tragedy.”<sup>65</sup> At the EU’s Dec. 17 summit, the French Government first tried to promote the idea that Turkey should be given privileged partner status rather than full membership. When that effort failed, it agreed that the EU should begin membership talks with Turkey – on the condition that these talks should be open-ended. In other words, the talks would not necessarily result in full membership and the EU giving Turkey special status (as opposed to full membership) would continue to be an alternative.

To explain this attitude, the French Government arranged for a general debate at the National Assembly on December 21. Prime Minister Jean-Pierre Raffarin said Turkey should consolidate its democracy, respect human rights and minority rights “especially with regard to the tragic Armenian and Kurdish questions”, confirm the reconciliation process with Greece and solve the Cyprus issue.<sup>66</sup> Later on, when criticized for not having used the word “genocide”, Raffarin said that speaking about the “Armenian genocide of 1915” was not a problem for him; and that actually France had a law regarding the -Armenian “genocide”.<sup>67</sup>

President Chirac claimed that the French might say “No” to Turkish full membership in the EU in the referendum to be held on this issue if Turkey failed to review its history.<sup>68</sup>

On the other hand, the French Government in order not jeopardize the referendum on the European Constitution had the French Constitution amended so that referendums can be held on the EU membership bids of newcomers beyond the year 2007 which means that in the future there will be a referendum in France on Turkey’s accession to the EU treaty.

In April the Louis Harris Institute conducted a survey<sup>69</sup> commissioned by the French Dashnak Party to find out to what extent Turkey’s EU accession process would be affected by the Armenian genocide allegations. According to the survey results, 39 percent of the people were in favor of Turkish accession to the EU while 53 percent were against it. Asked whether a potential Turkish recognition of the “Armenian Genocide” would facilitate the Turkish accession to the EU, 49 percent of those polled said no while 45 percent said yes. Obviously, Turkey’s recognizing or not recognizing the “Armenian Genocide” would have little effect

<sup>65</sup> CDCA, December 13, 2004.

<sup>66</sup> Le Figaro, December 22, 2004.

<sup>67</sup> Agence France Presse, December 21, 2004.

<sup>68</sup> Sansursuz, December 18, 2004.

<sup>69</sup> CDCA, May 13, 2004.

on the French public's opinion regarding Turkey's EU membership.

On the other hand, it must be noted that the great majority of the French people believe that Armenians had been subjected to genocide. This belief led the French Parliament to recognize the so-called Armenian Genocide by passing a law to this effect in 2001.<sup>70</sup> However, this law did not introduce any sanctions against those who refuse to accept the Armenian genocide allegations. The French Armenians have been trying to elicit from the French National Assembly a new law envisaging punishments for those who say or write in France that the "Armenian genocide" never happened. To this effect, a draft has been presented to the French National Assembly.

### **Belgium**

Belgium passed a law on March 23, 1995, introducing prison sentences in the 8 days to 12 months range and fines ranging from 26 Euro to 5000 Euro for those who deny the genocide or belittle it or try to justify it or praise acts of genocide or crimes against humanity. In its present form the bill could only be applied to the Jewish Holocaust. The Belgium National Assembly, the lower house of the parliament, amended this law on April 21, 2005, expanding its scope; and sent the new version to the Senate for approval.<sup>71</sup>

According to this proposed new version, events specified as genocide in a decision by the UN Security Council or the UN General Assembly or a court in Belgium or any other EU country would be deemed a case of genocide.<sup>72</sup> However, it has been realized that even with this amendment the bill would not apply to the Armenian genocide allegations. This is because neither the UN Security Council nor the UN General Assembly nor a court either in Belgium or any other EU member country has ever ruled that the Armenian relocation of 1915 was genocide. This time the Armenian lobby has been mobilized to amend the draft already relayed to the Senate by the lower house of the parliament. According to their proposal for a given event to be deemed genocide it would suffice for the European Parliament to adopt a resolution to this effect or for the parliament of an EU member country to pass a bill on this subject.<sup>73</sup> It is public knowledge

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70 Armenian Studies No: 1. pp.10-20.

71 Zaman, May 2005

72 Belgian Assembly Document No: 51 1284/009

73 Fédération Euro-Arménienne, Communiqué de Presse, May 5, 2005



that in 1987 the European Parliament passed a bill recognizing the so-called Armenian genocide. The French National Assembly did the same thing by passing a bill on January 30, 2001.

However, the Belgian Senate's Justice Commission, after long deliberations, refused to uphold the amendments to the law on the negation of genocide. During the Senate debates, those who opposed the amendments argued that "determining whether a given act constitutes genocide or not" is not a task for political organizations such as parliaments. This is a task for the judicial authorities, they stressed. This approach is in line with the UN Genocide Convention of 1948.

### **Germany**

The political formation that consists of the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) and the Christian Social Union (CSU) and is called Christian Democrats in short form, played a major role in the establishment of the Federal Republic of Germany in the aftermath of the Second World War. Christian Democrats are also the architect of the friendly and close relations built between Turkey and Germany in many areas in the post-war period. Christian Democrat governments provided Turkey with financial and military assistance at that time. It was a succession of Christian Democrat governments that decided to bring in from Turkey the majority of the foreign workers the German economy needed in the sixties.

This favorable picture started to change when the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the reunification of Germany diminished Turkey's strategic importance. Christian Democrats began to raise the integration problems of the Turkish migrant workers— an issue they had attached little importance until then. Christian Democrats opposed also Turkish membership in the EU but, since they believed weakening the Turkey-EU relations would be hazardous, they put forth the idea that Turkey should be given privileged partner status. The "Privileged Partnership" formula was promoted by rightwing political parties not only in Germany but in some other EU countries as well, in France especially, but in the end it could not get widespread approval and finally, at the European Summit of December 17, 2004, the EU decided to start full membership talks with Turkey.

Seeing that the privileged partnership formula would not materialize, Christian Democrats started looking for other options that would render Turkish membership in the EU more difficult. Armenian genocide allegations were chosen as the main tool to that end. They assumed that this would cause Social Democrats

who supported Turkish adhesion to EU, a significant loss of votes in the next parliamentary election.

It is no secret that the German people, especially those with rightwing tendencies, have been highly upset by the accusations against Germany and the Germans regarding the Holocaust, that is, the Jewish genocide. Their perception of this issue is as follows: If it could be proven that the Germans were not the first nation to commit the crime of genocide that would somehow lessen the Germans' moral culpability. Therefore, rightwing German parties tend to accuse others of committing genocide. When Christian Democrats decided to blame Turkey, they calculated that they would get popular support especially from these circles.

In line with this strategy, Christian Democrats presented a draft resolution to the German Bundestag on February 23, 2004 on the Armenian question. The draft was debated extensively among the political parties and, after certain alterations were made in it, the text was adopted by the Bundestag on June 16, 2005 without holding a vote. The title of the resolution is, "Commemoration of the Deportation and Massacring of the Armenians in 1915: Germany has to Participate in Reconciliation of Armenians and Turks."

The text adopted by the Bundestag is long and it touches on many issues. Some of them, which we deem important, are given below, accompanied by comments:

The resolution passed by the Bundestag does not contain the term "genocide". However, it uses expressions associated with genocide such as "the annihilation of almost all Armenians" and "extermination of Armenians through forceful expulsion". These expressions indicate that, as a matter of fact, Bundestag has accepted the genocide allegations of the Armenians. It is probable that the Bundestag refrained from using the word "genocide" because of the harsh reactions that might draw from the Turks living in Germany.

The resolution states that many Muslims from Turkey live in Germany; therefore it is an important duty for them, through remembrance of history, to contribute toward reconciliation. Such statements have come to mean indirectly that the Turks living in Germany are dutibound to admit that the Armenians had been subjected to genocide. But, the Turks in Germany legally have no such duty.

Statements of this kind are a clear sign of the growing wave of xenophobia in Germany.

The resolution says that the German federal states that make up the federal republic should, by way of education, contribute to the tackling in Germany of the issue of “extermination of Armenians through forced exile”. This means that the Armenian genocide allegations will be included in the curriculum of German schools. When this subject is taught in schools, German students will most probably develop anti-Turkish sentiments while the students of Turkish origin will be burdened with feelings of guilt. Such a sense of guilt might cause some of the Turkish students to be alienated from their own national identity. That would create a climate conducive to the “integration” or, to put it more clearly, Germanization of the students of Turkish origin, an issue to which Germans attach great importance.

The resolution recommends a number of measures, arguing that Turkey should open its border with Armenia. It says that Germany would help normalize the relations between Armenia and Turkey and thus contribute to stability in the Caucasus region. The resolution does not say, on the other hand, why and by whom exactly stability has been disrupted in Southern Caucasus. It is Armenia who undermines stability in the Caucasus by occupying Karabakh and other Azerbaijani territories, by not recognizing Turkey’s current borders, and by seeking political gains via the genocide allegations it directs against Turkey. The fact that the Bundestag did not mention at all these Armenian actions proves that the resolution is not an impartial one.

With this resolution the Bundestag has asked the Federal Government to make a number of moves some of which are as follows:

The Federal Government must strive to bring about Turkish-Armenian reconciliation. To that end one side would apologize for “the historic crime” and the other side would forgive it. As Turks do not accept the argument that they had committed a crime against the Armenians, it is out of the question for them to extend an apology. The Armenian question is not a psychological but a political issue based on calculations done for the sake of gaining advantages. Therefore, it could not be resolved merely with one side extending an “apology” and winning “forgiveness”.

The resolution urges the Federal Government to make an effort to ensure that the Turkish Parliament, Turkish Government and Turkish people would ponder without reservations “the role they have played” vis-à-vis the Armenian people in the past and at present. This ambiguous statement implies that Turkey’s Parliament, Government and people have to acknowledge the so-called Armenian genocide.

The Bundestag resolution reflects mainly Armenian views. This resolution is neither impartial nor fair. Therefore the Federal Government cannot be expected to make a positive contribution to the normalization of relations between Turkey and Armenia.

The Bundestag resolution backs the idea that a historians’ commission should be set up. Thus, in a way, it accepts the proposal made by Prime Minister Erdoğan. However, it argues that international experts too should take part in the commission.

On June 16, 2005 the Turkish Foreign Ministry vigorously condemned the Bundestag move.<sup>74</sup> The Ministry said that the resolution resulted from certain considerations involving German domestic politics. It pointed out that the Bundestag has put forth totally groundless arguments. Noting that the resolution made the kind of suggestions that could arouse anti-Turkish sentiments in the German youth, the Ministry said that it had duly contacted its German interlocutors, informing them in advance that such a resolution would adversely affect bilateral relations.

The Bundestag resolution will have no legal consequences for Turkey. This is because, according to the principle of national sovereignty, the parliament of a country cannot make a legally binding demand on another country. However, this decision may have political consequences and will probably cause problems in the relations between the two countries.

As mentioned above, the Bundestag passed this resolution unanimously. Not a single voice was heard in the Bundestag in favor of the Turkish views. This is totally unacceptable considering the very close relations between Turkey and Germany, the presence in Germany of more than three million Turks, and the fact that each year

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<sup>74</sup> <http://www.devletim.com/git.asp?id=390>

millions of German tourists visit Turkey. Taking into account this resolution which against Turkish interests and the fact that, the Christian Democrats are expected to come to power in the autumn, there will most probably be a serious crisis between the two countries in the near future.

We believe that, considering the fact that the traditional friendship and special ties with Germany do not exist anymore, Turkey should review its relations with that country and place these on new and more realistic foundations.