

FACTS AND COMMENTS

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The major events that took place in the summer of 2003 in Armenia, the Armenian Diaspora and Turkish-Armenian relations can be summarized as follows:

1- Parliamentary Elections and the New Armenian Government

Parliamentary elections in Armenia were held on May 25, 2003 and none of the political parties won a majority.

Prime Minister Andranik Markarian's Republican Party of Armenia won 32 of the 131 available seats, and thus, ranked as the first party.

The second successful party was the Country of Law that had been established in 1998 and is known to be closely affiliated with President Kocharian. A Western source has stated that this party benefits from the vast financial aid of a Western country, and, that the leader of the party, Arthur Baghdasarian, does not conceal his ambition of becoming president.¹

The alliance that the relatives and political supporters of Karen Demirchian and Vazgen Sarkasian (Speaker of Parliament and Prime Minister, respectively, in 1999, and both were killed in Parliament during an attack on October 27 of the same year) had formed against President Kocharian during the presidential elections was operational during the parliamentary elections as well. This alliance formed the 'Justice Block' and took part in the elections. Despite its being the major opposition movement in the country, the Justice Block obtained even less votes than the Republican and Country of Law parties. The Block maintains that this failure must be attributed to the election fraud.

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¹ David Petrosyan, 'Parliamentary Elections Preliminary Results and First Impressions', *The Noyan Tapan Highlights*, No. 21, June 2003.

The historic Armenian Revolutionary Federation (Dashnaks), known for its ultra nationalist and chauvinistic ideas, ranked fourth in the elections. This party was banned in Armenia during the presidency of Ter Petrosian, but was allowed again on the political arena after it started supporting Kocharian in the 1998 presidential elections.

The Republican Party and the Country of Law Party, both of which supported President Kocharian, were successful in the elections, but it is difficult to explain the relative failure of the Dashnaks despite the significant financial support of the Diaspora. It is possible that some of the voters did not look favorably upon the Dashnak attitude on the 'genocide' question, that is, of no immediate relevance, their extremist stance on the Karabakh issue and their rather passive position on other topics of internal politics.

The falsifications and irregularities² witnessed during the presidential elections were also seen during parliamentary elections. It appears that voting in the place of other electors and box stuffing were particularly common.³ Due to the economic hardship in Armenia, approximately one million of her citizens have migrated to the other countries, especially to Russia. It is known that many of these people who have left the country are still listed on the voters' registry. One source⁴ claims that the total of such persons, who were listed but who no longer live in Armenia, make up 30 % of the electorate and that many persons have voted in their place.

As in the presidential elections, the parliamentary elections were also followed by a large number of foreign observers. Two observer missions were particularly important. The first was an international mission led by the Parliamentary Assemblies of the OSCE and the Council of Europe as well as by the OSCE's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR). The American Bob Barry headed this mission. The other one was the delegation of the Commonwealth of Independent States, which had witnessed the presidential elections and was once again headed by the Russian Yuri Yarov.

² *Review of Armenian Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 3, pp.19-20.

³ *Noyan Tapan*, May 27, 2003.

⁴ *Agence France Presse*, May 25, 2003.

In the long and detailed report that the OSCE/ODIHR published⁵ following the elections, it was stated that the preliminary results indicated that, compared with the presidential balloting in March, the parliamentary elections did represent an improvement in terms of the freedom of campaigning and the freedom of press; while it fell short of international norms in the field of democratic election standards.

On the other hand, the Head of the Commonwealth of Independent States Observer Mission, Yuri Yarov, stated that the elections met the requirements of Armenian election law and that they were open and democratic. He also added that there had been some irregularities but that these were not of a proportion that would change the outcome of the elections.⁶

The differences of opinion of the two missions for the presidential elections surfaced again regarding parliamentary elections. In fact, this difference reflects two different conceptions. While the Western countries see free and fair elections as a precondition of democracy, some of the former Soviet block countries tend to consider elections as more of a formality.

Armenia faces serious problems with Azerbaijan and Turkey due to the Karabakh conflict and her allegations of genocide. On the other hand, Armenia, which has excellent relations with Russia, tries to be in very good terms with the European states and the USA. Therefore, foreign policy should be of a particular significance for that country. Despite this, foreign policy issues commanded little space in the election programs of the parties; and vague terms devoid of real content were used. In line with this trend, little space was devoted to the relations with Turkey.

Only the two historic parties, Armenian Revolutionary Federation and the Armenian Democratic Liberal Party (Ramgavar), used the 'genocide' issue for election campaign; while other parties almost did not mention this subject. This fact proves that the people of Armenia, unlike the Armenians of the Diaspora, do not see the 'genocide' as a main concern.

The Constitution of Armenia came into force in 1995 during the era of Ter Petrosian. This Constitution drew great criticism because

⁵ OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission - Parliamentary Elections, Republic of Armenia, May 25, 2003, Statement of Preliminary Findings and Conclusions, Yerevan, May 26, 2003.

⁶ *ArmenPress*, May 26, 2003.

of the vast powers it gave to the President of State. With the support of President Kocharian, a new draft was prepared. This draft, which amended 80% of the existing 114 articles, was ratified by the Parliament. A referendum concerning the constitutional amendments was held simultaneously with the parliamentary elections, but, as the necessary percentage of approval was not obtained, the amendments were rejected.⁷

The rejection of amendments was first and foremost a failure for President Kocharian. However, this gives the president an opportunity to claim that he is working for democratic conditions to be established in the country. Had the referendum yielded a 'yes' vote, it would have meant a slight curtailing of the powers of the president, yet as things stand today, the president continues to enjoy vast powers including dissolving parliament; and appointing as well as ousting the prime minister.

After the elections the Republican Party of Prime Minister Andranik Makarian, the Country of Law Party and the Armenian Revolutionary Federation set up a coalition government in which the Republican Party holds 7 ministerial seats as well as the seat of the prime minister; and the Country of Law and Armenian Revolutionary Federation hold three ministerial seats each. President Kocharian became the de facto fourth partner of the coalition by personally appointing the ministers of defense, foreign affairs and justice.

The 34-year-old leader of the Country of Law Party, Arthur Baghdasarian, was elected as the speaker of parliament; and his two deputies were elected from the ARF and the Republican Party.

The program read out by Prime Minister Markarian on June 19 in Parliament basically proposed to improve education, health and social services in the next four years, and to fight poverty. It is stated that the annual increase of GNP in the country must be no less than 6 % for this to be realized. Since Armenia's GNP increased by 12,9 % last year, this objective can be realized. Upon the insistence of the ARF, an addition was made to the program in which it was stated that corruption, which had hampered the development of the country for so long, would be fought.⁸

⁷ *ArmenPress*, May 28, 2003.

⁸ *RFE/IRL*, June 19, 2003, and *ArmenPress*, June 20, 2003.

In the program, there was no reference to the policies of the state on foreign policy, human rights and the Karabakh conflict. While delivering the program, Prime Minister Markarian only stated that Karabakh cannot be a part of Azerbaijan, adding that there must be a common border between Armenia and Karabakh; and that Karabakh must have the right to self-determination.⁹

It is obvious that the government left the determination of foreign, defense and justice policies to the president. In practice, however, this de facto leads to the existence of two kinds of government in Armenia: one is responsible from the foreign, defense and justice policies; and a second one is accountable for the rest. On the other hand, it is possible that the government did not include the policies left to the President into its program because it wished to stress that the government is not responsible from those matters.

2- Turkish-Armenian Relations

Armenian official circles, that hoped that Turkey would resume diplomatic relations with Armenia and/or open her borders after the Turkish AKP (Justice and Development Party) came to power, was disillusioned by the Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's statements when he visited Azerbaijan in January 2003.¹⁰

The Armenians once again became optimistic when it was reported that the Turkish Foreign Minister said in Antalya in May 2003: 'if Armenia is ready to recognize the territorial integrity of Turkey and to renounce its territorial claims, Ankara is ready to be friends with Yerevan'.¹¹ Answering the questions of journalists on May 25, Armenian Foreign Minister Vardan Oskanian repeated the desire of Armenia to start negotiations with Turkey without preconditions and that it was a positive development that Abdullah Gül had not tied the issue to the Karabakh issue. Oskanian added, 'if that is the official policy of Turkey, it must be welcomed. I believe that through this the path to the normalization of our relations will be opened'. Oskanian also praised the incumbent Turkish authorities for introducing positive changes in their foreign

⁹ *Haykakan Jamanak*, June 20, 2003.

¹⁰ *Review of Armenian Studies*, No. 3, p. 22.

¹¹ *Arminfo*, May 21, 2003.

policy, which in turn 'has changed the overall situation in the region'. He expressed hope for a meeting to take place between the two countries' foreign ministers soon where a more detailed discussion of this announcement could be held.¹²

In recent years, the foreign ministers of the two countries had been meeting quite frequently. Yet, the elections held both in Turkey and Armenia halted these contacts. The NATO Ministerial Meeting and the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council in early June 2003 brought the two foreign ministers together in Madrid. According to the press statement of the Armenian Foreign Ministry 'they discussed regional issues, the Nagorno Karabakh resolution process, as well as bilateral matters. The ministers agreed that improved relations between the two countries would have a positive effect on the regional stability and security. Ministers Oskanian and Gül found this first get-acquainted session valuable for promoting dialogue, and they agreed to meet again'.¹³

The positive atmosphere created by the Madrid meeting caused the Dashnaks to clarify their policy. ARF Supreme Body Representative Armen Rustamian made the following statement in response to a question of a journalist: 'Turkey must first observe neutrality on the Karabakh issue; second it must recognize the Armenian genocide. If these two conditions are satisfied, only then will it be possible to think about developing truly normal relations with Turkey'.¹⁴ It's noteworthy that while the Dashnaks are introducing preconditions, for years, the Armenian Foreign Ministry has insistently stated that there are no preconditions attached to developing relations or starting diplomatic relations with Turkey. Since the Dashnaks are a coalition partner there seems to be a dormant disagreement within the government concerning the relations with Turkey.

On the other hand, Armenian Foreign Minister Oskanian, in reference to the meeting in Madrid, stated that the Turkish Government's stance on Armenia had undergone substantial changes, adding that the Turkish regime was inclined to normalizing relations with Armenia. He also said that the dialogue between the two states would continue, and that even with small steps, a positive change in bilateral relations would definitely be

¹² *ArmenPress*, May 25, 2003.

¹³ Press Release, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia, June 4, 2003.

¹⁴ *Asbarez*, June 12, 2003.

achieved. He added that the resolution of this issue was one of the conditions for the membership of Turkey to the European Union (EU).¹⁵

The Copenhagen Criteria, which stipulate the conditions for Turkish membership to the EU, do not mention relations with Armenia. Yet, the European Parliament has tried to create a linkage to the Copenhagen Criteria by adding to its most recent resolution¹⁶ concerning Turkish accession to the Union the following sentence: 'Of course the resolution of the Cyprus question and the normalization of relations with Armenia also form part of the fulfillment of the Copenhagen Criteria.' Yet, the final and binding position on this issue is that of the European Commission which conducts the accession negotiations.

In its aforementioned resolution, the European Parliament called also on the Turkish authorities to promote good neighborly relations with Armenia and stated that first steps in this direction could be the resumption of diplomatic relations and the opening of borders.

As to the 'genocide' issue, a proposal aiming at the addition of an article to the resolution that would require Turkey to recognize the 'Armenian genocide' was rejected, and instead, only a reference to previous resolutions on this matter was made.

As can be seen, this resolution of the European Parliament supports Armenian views. This has caused Armenian Foreign Minister Oskanian to claim that the normalization of the relations between the two countries is a pre-requisite for the accession of Turkey to the EU.

In the same speech, Oskanian also said that the USA was insistent on the resolution of the conflict between the two countries. It has been known for a long time that the USA, with the aim of achieving peace and stability in the Caucasus, has been trying to bring about normalization in Turkish-Armenian relations. It is also known that the USA has been trying to bring closer the representatives of civil society organizations through initiatives such as the Turkish-Armenian Reconciliation Commission and through the meetings of the journalists and women's associations of both sides.

¹⁵ *Arminfo*, June 12, 2003.

¹⁶ This report, known as the Oostlander Report in reference to its author and the attached resolution was passed on June 5, 2003 with 216 in favor, 75 opposing and 38 abstention votes.

In a letter¹⁷ of the American State Department addressed to some congressmen, who represent Armenian interests, it was stated that during the visit of Foreign Minister Gül to Washington on July 24, Foreign Secretary Powell raised with him the need for reconciliation between Turkey and Armenia, and that the two ministers specifically addressed the opening of the land border. The said letter summarizes American policy on this issue as follows: 'Progress on Turkish-Armenian reconciliation is a top priority for us and we will continue to press the issue with the highest levels of the Turkish and Armenian governments at every opportunity'.

On the other hand it is obvious that Turkey has become under pressure due to the possibility of a resolution being passed in American Congress that would also refer to the alleged Armenian genocide.

The successful meeting between the two foreign ministers in Madrid, the most recent pro-Armenian resolution of the European Parliament, the insistence of the USA on reconciliation between the two states, and the draft resolutions in Congress led to an impression that there would soon be positive developments in Turkish-Armenian relations. There was speculation in the press of both countries that Turkey would soon open the border with Armenia; and that Prime Minister Erdoğan would make a formal statement on this matter in his visit to Kars at the end of June.¹⁸

However, Prime Minister Erdoğan did not mention the opening of borders in his Kars speech on June 27; and stated that the normalization of relations would come about only after the Armenian side gave up its allegations of genocide.¹⁹ During an appearance on television Foreign Minister Gül said; 'there is no border gate (between the two countries) at the moment but why shouldn't there be one in the future?' He pointed out that Turkey wanted good neighborly relations with Armenia and went on to say 'There is nothing to be ashamed of in our history'.²⁰

Thereby it became clear that, despite the pressure from the USA and the European Parliament, Turkey did not intend to fully normalize her relations with Armenia until the latter changed her

¹⁷ ANCA Press Release, August 5, 2003.

¹⁸ *Radikal*, June 25, 2003; *Azg*, June 27, 2003.

¹⁹ *Azg* in reference to the *TRT* on June 29, 2003.

²⁰ *Anadolu News Agency*, June 29, 2003.

attitude towards Turkey, for example, retracted her allegations of genocide.

Reacting to Erdoğan's attitude, some of the Armenian press pointed out that, although Turkish Prime Minister had not chosen to normalize relations with Armenia, he had also not mentioned the resolution of the Karabakh conflict as a precondition and that this in itself was a positive sign.²¹

As relations with Turkey became a topic of discussion in Armenia, Foreign Minister Oskanian gave an interview on Armenian state television on July 2. In summary, Oskanian said that Turkey was paying more attention to bilateral relations today while previously the focus was on Karabakh. He stressed that the two sides expressed the intention of normalizing bilateral relations step by step, adding that border trade and the opening of the railway lines were possible without establishing diplomatic relations. Oskanian also said that Armenia never used the recognition of the genocide as a condition for the normalization of Turkish-Armenian relations, however, they had told the Turkish side that recognition of the genocide will remain on the agenda of Armenian foreign policy. He stated that they would take up the genocide issue after establishing diplomatic relations with Turkey.²²

Regarding the proposal of Turkey that a trilateral meeting to be held between Turkey, Azerbaijan and Armenia; Oskanian said that the purpose of such a meeting may not be the discussion of the Karabakh problem, and that Turkey cannot be the mediator in the search for a settlement. He added that the main subjects of the agenda must be regional cooperation, bilateral relations and the settlement of the Karabakh conflict within the framework of these issues.

The most important aspect of the statements of the Armenian foreign minister is that Turkey no longer regards the Karabakh problem as a factor in her relations with Armenia. On the other hand, although Oskanian does not say it openly, it is clear that Turkey wishes to continue her involvement in the Karabakh problem through the trilateral meeting mentioned above. It is also understood that the two sides wish to develop their relations step by step (by allowing border trade or opening the railway line) and

²¹ *Armenialiberty*, July 1, 2003; *RFE/RL*, July 30, 2003.

²² Public Television of Armenia, July 2, 2003 in *Ann Groong*, July 4, 2003.

to establish diplomatic relations at the end of this process. Finally, Armenia will not bring up the issue of the genocide until it has set up normal relations with Turkey.

As to the Prime Minister Erdoğan's statement in Kars, the first reaction came from the Dashnaks who made the following statement: 'The AFR has on numerous occasions announced that it supports the establishment of normal relations between Armenia and Turkey, but that this can only come about when Turkey accepts the historical truth. The Armenian-Turkish dialogue can bear results only when Turkey accepts the fact of the Armenian genocide, which is not an object of negotiation. No Armenia-Turkey or Armenian-Turkish dialogue has any future prospect as long as Turkey continues to take sides on the question of Artsakh/Karabakh and does not lift its blockade of Armenia.'²³

President Kocharian's press spokesman Ashot Kocharian stated that Armenia wished to normalize her relations with Turkey without any pre-conditions and added that this would allow both sides to take up a number of issues, including the most sensitive ones. As mentioned above, Foreign Minister Oskanian said that Armenia had never used the recognition of genocide as a condition for the normalization of Armenian-Turkish relations. On another occasion, he made very clear the policy of the government when he said 'no matter if Turkey recognizes the genocide or not, Armenia is ready to establish diplomatic relations with that country'.²⁴ All these statements contradicted with Dashnaks' pre-conditions.

Arthur Baghdasarian, who is the leader of the junior partner party in the coalition and was also elected as the Speaker of Parliament, proposed that a Turkish-Armenian parliamentary commission is set up so as to develop bilateral relations.²⁵ The Deputy of the Dashnak Party criticized Baghdasarian describing his proposed step as incorrect reminding him that there are no diplomatic ties between Turkey and Armenia.²⁶

These discussions regarding Turkey quickly turned into a debate in the Armenian public opinion with the focus being on whether or not Armenia would benefit from the opening of the border with Turkey.

²³ *Asbarez*, June 30, 2003.

²⁴ *Haykakan Jamanak*, July 11, 2003.

²⁵ *Hürriyet* and *A1 web*, July 11, 2003.

²⁶ *Mediamax*, July 14, 2003.

Although Deputy Trade Minister Tigran Davtiyan said that there would be an increase of 1 billion dollars in local production if the border with Turkey were to be opened,²⁷ the Dashnaks claimed that the opening of the border would be a matter of national security; those that would be harmed by the opening of the border would outnumber those that would benefit from it and that cheap Turkish goods of inferior quality would harm production in Armenia.²⁸

The Dashnaks also opposed to the connection of the railway lines of the two states in case the border is opened. The Dashnak Deputy Speaker of Parliament, Vahan Hovanisian, stated that the opening of the border would be profitable for Armenia only in case of transit, when along with the railway with Turkey, the railway with Azerbaijan and Abkhazia are opened, too. He also said that Armenia would become an appendage of the Eastern Turkish market, otherwise.²⁹

It is clear that the Dashnak objection to the opening of the border is based on political reasons than economic ones. The economic excuse, that the Armenian market will be flooded by Turkish goods if the border is opened, is in fact not a probability since Turkish businessmen are already trading with Armenia via Georgia.³⁰ It would be normal that Turkish exports would increase somewhat if the border is opened, but it should be expected that the Armenian exports to Turkey would increase as well. In addition to this, experience shows that restricting imports with the fear of being swamped by cheap imports only promotes smuggling.

The true concern of the Dashnaks is that development of trade may lead to the improvement of political relations. Since the philosophy of this party is based on opposing Turkey in every field, they perceive any improvement in Turkish-Armenian relations as a threat to their existence, and, therefore, attempt to prevent it.

Although Foreign Minister Oskanian stated that the opening of borders would not have a negative impact on the Armenian economy,³¹ it can be seen that the government circles in Yerevan are starting to have doubts on this subject.

²⁷ *Panarmenian*, July 2, 2003.

²⁸ *Yerkir*, July 11, 2003.

²⁹ *Armenia Now*, July 29, 2003.

³⁰ *Golos Armenii* (August 13, 2003) states that Turkish exports to Armenia are worth 25-30 million Dollars, while Armenian exports are worth approximately 10 million Dollars.

³¹ *Golos Armenii*, July 19, 2003.

The member of the coalition partner Republican Party and Deputy Speaker of Parliament, Tigran Torosyan, stated that his party was not in favor of opening the border with Turkey, but did support the initiation of dialogue without preconditions, adding that the opening of the border should not mean uncontrolled trade.³²

The Armenian Minister of Trade and Economic Development, Karen Cheshmaritian, said that there was no in-depth analysis of the consequences of opening the border with Turkey, that while opening the railway one should bear in mind both the capacity of Armenia increasing its exports and the potential opportunities of Turkish imports; also stressing that another question to consider would be how comfortable an environment Armenia would be for Turkish investors. The minister pointed out that the World Trade Organization (WTO) norms were not valid in their relations with Turkey, saying, 'When we entered the WTO, Turkey said that it would apply Article 13 in the charter of this organization. This means that the principles of the WTO in trade between Turkey and Armenia are not valid. Thus, both Turkey and Armenia can apply with regard to each other any trade regime that is deemed necessary by the two governments.'³³

Obviously, the members of the Armenian government, under the influence of the Dashnaks, are already looking for ways of limiting trade with Turkey even before any decision has been taken to open the borders. On the other hand, the issue being important, some political parties have requested the Turkish-Armenian relations to be discussed in the Parliament.

3. The Diaspora and Turkey

The Director General of the Department of Intelligence and Research of the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Ecvet Tezcan, traveled to the USA in early June to hold talks with the leading organizations of the Diaspora. The aim of the visit was to inform these organizations of the views of Turkey and to learn their opinions at a time when efforts to normalize Turkish-Armenian bilateral relations were intensified.

The visit of Ambassador Tezcan caused concern in the Dashnaks. The Dashnak organization Armenian National

³² *Interfax*, July 30, 2003.

³³ *Golos Armenii*, August 13, 2003.

Committee of America (ANCA) published a press release and asked the other Armenian organizations to remain vigilant against such Turkish initiatives.³⁴ The President of ANCA, Kenneth V. Hachikian, said: 'We stand in principle that the very existence of such meetings in the absence of full acknowledgement and acceptance of responsibility for the Armenian genocide will only serve the Turkish Government's campaign to deny the Armenian genocide. We believe that it would be a very serious mistake to accept the invitation to meet this senior Turkish official', thereby trying to prevent Armenian organizations from meeting with Ambassador Tezcan.

The Armenian Assembly of America (AAA), which is the second largest Armenian organization in the USA, stated that they would meet with Ambassador Tezcan only if the Armenian 'genocide', Turkish-Armenian relations, the Karabakh peace process, and treatment of the Armenian minority in Turkey would be discussed as well.³⁵ When told that this would be possible, representatives of the AAA met with Ambassador Tezcan; and with a press statement they made public the content of the meeting.³⁶ According to this statement, the representatives of the AAA told Ambassador Tezcan that the Diaspora is united in its insistence that Turkey should deal with the Armenian 'genocide', establish normal relations with Armenia that are not dictated by the Azerbaijani position on Karabakh, and end its restrictions and pressures on Armenian communal life in Turkey.

The historic Ramgavar Party (Armenian Liberal Democratic Party) met with Ambassador Tezcan without preconditions. According to an article published in the media of the party,³⁷ the Ramgavar delegation told Tezcan that the important issues between Turkey and Armenia could be resolved through continuous contacts and negotiations. They also took up the issues of the Armenian 'genocide', the Turkish embargo on Armenia, the peaceful resolution of the Karabakh conflict, the plight of the Armenian population in Turkey and the condition of architectural monuments in historic Armenia, which they say is part of Turkey today. After expressing his views on these issues, Ambassador Tezcan said that instead of hearing these assessments from third parties, as had

³⁴ ANCA Press Release, June 6, 2003.

³⁵ AAA Press Release, June 6, 2003.

³⁶ AAA Press Release, June 12, 2003.

³⁷ Mirror On Line, June 15, 2003.

been the case in the past 80 years, he had decided to hear them directly from the Armenians of the Diaspora. He added that as long as Armenians keep the right perspective and they do not entertain illusions, these discussions may constitute concrete steps towards more substantial changes in the relations of Turkey and Armenia.

Ambassador Tezcan also traveled to the west coast of the USA where he met with representatives of the Armenian Benevolent Union (AGBU) and the Western Diocese of the Armenian Church of North America. Like their counterparts on the east coast, during these meetings, the Armenian side dwelled upon issues such as genocide, the normalization of relations between Turkey and Armenia, and the Armenian minority in Turkey.³⁸

Ambassador Tezcan also met with other representatives of Armenian organizations in both the east and west coasts, however, the names of these organizations were not made public.

Armenian organizations made press statements about these contacts, and the Diaspora media –especially that of the Dashnaks–covered these contacts in detail. The aim of the Dashnak media was to prevent the other organizations from having meetings with Ambassador Tezcan, and to use this opportunity to make public their hardliner views once again. The other Armenian organizations, on the other hand, tried to deflect criticism of the Dashnaks by making public that during their meetings with Tezcan they had taken up issues on which all Armenians would agree such as the normalization of Turkish-Armenian relations, ‘genocide’, and the Armenian minority in Turkey.

The contacts of Ambassador Tezcan once again displayed the deep split between the Dashnaks and the other Armenian organizations. The Dashnaks demanded that Turkey must first recognize the genocide and accept its responsibility (in other words give land to Armenians and pay them compensation) in order to meet with the Turkish representative. The other Armenian organizations did not make such demands and only brought up the issue of the ‘genocide’ during the meeting with Ambassador Tezcan. Since there was no mention of it in their declarations, they did not bring up territorial claims or demand compensation. This was more in line with the attitude of the Armenian government, which contrary to the Dashnaks, favored the initiation of dialogue without preconditions.

³⁸ AAA, AGBU, *Western Diocese of the Armenian Church of North America*, Press Release, June 18, 2003.

4. The 'Genocide' Draft Resolution in the U.S. Congress

A draft resolution aiming at commemorating the anniversary of the signing of the UN Convention on Genocide by the USA had been submitted to the American House of the Representatives in 2002. The draft also intended to reaffirm U.S. support for the Convention. A paragraph of the resolution reads 'the enactment of the Genocide Convention Implementation Act marked a principled stand by the United States against the crime of genocide and an important step toward ensuring that the lessons of the Holocaust, the Armenian genocide, the genocides in Cambodia, Rwanda and elsewhere will be used to help prevent future genocides'. This wording meant indirect recognition by the House of Representatives of the alleged Armenian genocide.

This draft (H.Res.183) was re-introduced again to The House of Representatives in early 2003. Due to the unfavorable atmosphere in the USA concerning Turkey's attitude regarding the American operation in Iraq, the draft was quickly passed in the Judiciary Committee and become ready for final voting. However, the Speaker of the House, Dennis Hastert, did not have the draft voted yet.

This draft was submitted to the Senate (S. Res 184) and was supported by 30 Senators out of 100. But, also here, the draft was not yet voted.

On the other hand, there was a new attempt in the Senate to make an addition to the draft budget of the U.S. State Department in which indirect recognition of the alleged genocide was intended. The Senate went into recess before this attempt could be finalized.³⁹

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One of the reasons for the above mentioned drafts' not being voted is the objections of the Jewish lobby. The American Jews were disturbed by the Armenian attempt to usurp a topic that basically concerned the Jewish people. The American Jewish Committee

sent a letter to Congress stressing that the genocide issue should

³⁹ Nethaber, May 28, 2003.

not be attached to the draft budget of the State Department and called for the reference to the Armenian 'genocide' to be removed.⁴⁰

Sources in Washington reported that U.S. Vice President Dick Cheney and Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz and Assistant Secretary of State Richard Armitage had personally contacted senators asking them not to vote in favor of the draft resolution.⁴¹ The departing U.S. Ambassador in Ankara, Robert Pearson, confirmed the intervention of Cheney.⁴² Turkish Prime Minister Erdoğan said that he had spoken three times to Vice President Dick Cheney who was sincere and kept his promise. Erdoğan noted that the resolution did not come onto agenda thanks to the efforts of Cheney.⁴³

It would be normal to assume that the U.S. officials had intervened to offset the very negative impact on Turkish society of the mistreatment by U.S. forces of 11 Turkish soldiers whom they detained in the Northern Iraqi city of Sulaymania on July 4. It appears that a resolution on the 'genocide' was halted because it would have led to very serious tensions as an event immediately following the detention of the Turkish soldiers by the U.S. troops. Yet it should also be remembered that these drafts remain on the agenda of both the House and Senate and that they will be easily voted if the U.S. Government would not have any objection.

⁴⁰ *Hürriyet*, July 11, 2003.

⁴¹ *Sabah*, July 11, 2003.

⁴² *Turkish Daily News*, July 12, 2003.

⁴³ *Anadolu News Agency*, July 13, 2003.