

FACTS AND COMMENTS

Ömer E. LÜTEM*

This article focuses on the main developments in Turkish-Armenian relations during the first five-months of the year 2004, which could be summarized as follows:

During this period one of the most important issues in Turkish-Armenian relations was the opening of borders between the two countries. Armenian hopes were not fully materialized, as Turkey connected the opening to compromises on the Karabagh conflict and to withdrawal of Armenian troops from the occupied Azerbaijan territories.

There have been some important developments in the United States. President Bush again did not mention the word "genocide" in his 24 of April statement, however the Democratic Party candidate for the next presidential election, Senator John Kerry, supported Armenian allegations. Worldwide famous *National Geographic* magazine, in an article in its March 2004 issue, did the same.

The Canadian House of Commons, neglected its government's opinion by adopting a motion that recognized the genocide allegations of the Armenians.

French President Jacques Chirac faced strong objections from his country's Armenian population when he said that the recognition of the Armenian "genocide" is not a condition for Turkey's membership to the European Union. On the contrary, the French Socialist Party stated that Turkey should recognize these allegations even before beginning EU accession negotiations.

The European Parliament resolutions on Turkey's accession and on South Caucasus policy reflected mainly Armenian views, however the European Court of Justice rejected an Armenian association request that claimed that the candidate status of Turkey to the European Union was in violation of the June 18, 1987 parliamentary resolution.

* Ambassador (Ret.)

The Armenian Revolutionary Federation held its 29th Congress in February. At the Congress, Party chairmen asked for the "liberation" of Eastern Anatolia.

As to Turkey, the Second Congress on Armenian Studies was held at the end of May in Ankara. A book entitled "Armenians: Exile and Emigration," which is based on non-Turkish sources and which contradicts Armenian allegations, has been published by the Turkish Historical Society. Finally, Turkish and Armenian scholars agreed to meet to discuss Turkish-Armenian issues.

I. Turkey-Armenia and Azerbaijan Relations

1. Visit of the Turkish Foreign Minister to Azerbaijan

During the official visit of Foreign Minister Gül to Azerbaijan on 9-10 January 2004, bilateral issues as well as relations with Armenia and most importantly the Karabagh conflict were discussed. The Azerbaijanis were naturally concerned that Abdullah Gül—like his predecessor İsmail Cem—was having regular meetings with the Armenian Foreign Minister Oskanian and also because Oskanian was making optimistic comments about these meetings.

In an interview on television the Azerbaijani Foreign Minister Vilayet Guliyev expressed their concerns with the following statement; "... naturally we have, so to speak, many expectations from Turkey, because Turkey is a country that is giving much support to Azerbaijan with regard to the occupation that Azerbaijan has been suffering. That is why, we are naturally following Armenian-Turkish relations with special sensitivity ... Armenia has territorial claims on Turkey as well. Armenia is constantly keeping the fictitious genocide issue on the agenda. That is why, if Turkey makes even a minor move towards Armenia, it may harm both Azerbaijan's and its own national interests. Any move of this nature should be attentively examined, and we hope that in general, moves of this nature will not be made until the Karabakh conflict is settled."¹

Gül tried to alleviate the concerns of the Azerbaijani side during his visit. He stated that it would be hard to solve the problem peacefully as long as Armenia's occupation continues and that

¹ ANS TV, Baku, January 10, 2004

there have been no recent changes in Turkey's relationship with Armenia.² On whether Turkey was considering reopening its border with landlocked Armenia, Gül said: "There is no such thing for now."... "We wish a peaceful solution to this conflict. In the future, we will come together in a trilateral meeting and discuss how to solve this."³ On the other hand, while visiting President İlham Aliyev Gül said, "As you know, the Karabakh problem is not only yours, it is ours as well. Efforts are being made for the peaceful solution of this problem in the frame of the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan. We hope the other side will also demonstrate good will and a constructive position and the world will assist to settle this conflict peacefully and fairly, and that the occupied lands of Azerbaijan will be liberated. Turkey will do its best in this direction. There should be no doubt regarding this."⁴

2. Visit of the Turkish Prime Minister to the USA and the Armenian Issue

The Turkish Prime Minister made an official visit to the United States at the end of January. Armenian organizations and supporters of the Armenians in the US undertook certain initiatives against this visit. In a letter sent to President Bush the co-chairs of the Armenia caucus, Congressmen Frank Pallone and Joe Knollenberg, insisted that the President demand from Erdoğan that Turkey lift her economic blockade on Armenia in order for economic, political and cultural relations between Turkey and Armenia to be re-established. The letter was submitted to the other Congressmen with the aim of obtaining their signatures.⁵ The fact that approximately 50 members signed this letter⁶ shows that about half of the Armenian caucus did not participate in this initiative. On the other hand this letter dealt only with the opening of the borders and left out the topic of the genocide allegation that is generally always addressed. This displayed the fact that the issue of the opening of the borders has currently superseded the issue of the genocide claims.

² *Baku Today*, January 9, 2004

³ *Associated Press Worldstream*, January 8, 2004

⁴ *Azer Tag*, *Azerbaijan Info Agency*, January 10, 2004

⁵ *Armenian Assembly of America*, Press Release, January 22, 2004

⁶ *A1plus*, January 28, 2004

The largest Armenian Dashnak organization in the US, the Armenian National Committee of Armenia (ANCA), objected when the American Jewish Congress presented its Bravery Award to Prime Minister Erdoğan. ANCA initiated a campaign in which protesting faxes and e-mails were sent to President Bush.

In New York, Prime Minister Erdoğan addressed the Armenian issue on January 27, 2004 while speaking to some of the representatives of Turks living in the US.⁷ He displayed Turkish willingness to be more active on this issue by expressing that his Government did not want to follow a defensive policy but an offensive one. He also said that historians should deal with these matters, "Let us deal with today, let us deal with the future" Erdoğan stated. He pointed out also that there were numerous requests in Turkey from the persons living in vicinity of the frontiers with Armenia, that the borders be opened. The Prime Minister implied that this could happen if the friendly hand of Turkey is not pushed away (by Armenia).

When asked during a conference at Harvard University on January 31 what he would do if Turkey's accession to the EU would be made conditional on her recognizing the genocide, he said "it is wrong to depict something that did not happen as if it has happened and it is wrong to carry it into the future". He then mentioned the positive aspects of the relations between Turkey and Armenia such as the meetings of the Foreign Ministers and the flights between the two countries and added "it is wrong to talk of genocide after all of these developments, you can not serve humanity by talking about such things. In a world where we expect peace to become a global phenomenon these are bombs that shatter peace. You must serve peace."⁸

The above statements of the Prime Minister may be interpreted to mean that Turkey could open the borders if the Armenian side provides a gesture of good will first. Although it is difficult to assess what such a gesture should be, as the Karabagh issue is currently on the forefront, one might think that a positive step on this issue is expected from the Armenian side.

As to the official meetings, Prime Minister Erdoğan and President Bush met on January 28, 2004. While President Bush was informing the press about this meeting, he did not mention Turkish-

⁷ *Hürriyet*, January 28, 2004

⁸ *Hürriyet*, February 1st, 2004

Armenian relations as one of the topics discussed. It was only natural that this issue should not come up when issues such as Cyprus and Iraq were the main points on the agenda.

On the other hand press reports seem to indicate that the matter was discussed between Foreign Minister Gül and Secretary of State Powell and that Gül might linked the opening of the borders to progress being made on the Karabagh issue.⁹

3. The Border Issue and President Ilham Aliiev's Visit to Turkey

After Prime Minister Erdogan's visit to the US some Azerbaijani circles had the impression that the Turkish border with Armenia was about to be opened. Protest mail was sent, articles critical of Turkey were published in the Azerbaijani press;¹⁰ and comments were made that the Prime Minister was compelled to compromise on the opening of the border by the US government and the Armenian Diaspora.¹¹

To a question concerning Turkey's attitude President Ilham Aliyev answered as follows: "I do not want to make assumptions. I talked to Mr. Erdogan on this subject when I visited Ankara as Prime Minister. The Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Gül reassured me that Turkey would never open its border with Armenia until the Karabakh conflict is resolved. This is enough for me. I do not need any other explanation if I heard this myself. But I should say that the European Union and some other fairly influential countries in the world are exerting strong pressure on Turkey to make it open the border. I have repeatedly told the meetings with relevant sides that a Karabakh resolution will be generally impossible if Turkey opens its border with Armenia, because Azerbaijan will have lost an important lever and then peaceful negotiations will generally fail. This will stop the negotiations and lead to unpleasant results. For this reason, if the sides interested in the issue want a peaceful solution to the problem, then they should not put pressure on Turkey. Turkey is a big and strong state. I am convinced that Turkey will cope with all this pressure. Turkish-Azerbaijani fraternity is above everything for us and the Turkish people."¹²

⁹ *Anatolian Agency*, January 30, 2004

¹⁰ *Baku Sun*, March 26, 2004

¹¹ *525*, September 13, 2004

¹² *ANS TV*, March 24, 2004

Turkey shares the attitude of Azerbaijan in essence; however, Turkey might be willing to open the borders if some conditions are fulfilled.

abandons its one-sided approaches favoring Azerbaijan" a ministry statement said.¹³

Reacting to the remarks of Aliyev, the Armenian Foreign Ministry stated that a lifting of the Turkish blockade would on the contrary facilitate a Karabakh settlement. "Turkey could really be an important factor in political and economic developments in our region if it

Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage, during a visit to the Armenian capital, Yerevan¹⁴ said on that subject: "It seems to me that the opening of the border between Armenia and Turkey would benefit the peoples of both sides rather dramatically and rather quickly".

In an interview with Azerbaijan Television during the visit of Ilham Aliyev to Turkey, Turkish Foreign Minister Gül stated that he was informed about those protests and about Azerbaijan's concerns. The Turkish government's official position is that the Turkish-Armenian border will not be re-opened unless Armenia is ready to make compromises on the Karabakh conflict, withdraws its troops from the occupied territories, and unless the US-based Armenian lobby drops its false claims about the alleged Armenian genocide. He also said he had voiced this stance during a meeting with his Armenian counterpart Vardan Oskanian and he would inform the Armenian government about the final and firm position of Turkey in this regard during their next meeting.¹⁵

Judging by the declarations above the attitudes of the relevant states towards the opening of the border can be summarized as follows:

Armenia and the US stand with opening of the borders without pre-conditions. Azerbaijan, on the contrary, is totally against opening of the borders. Turkey shares the attitude of Azerbaijan in essence; however, Turkey might be willing to open the borders if some conditions are fulfilled. But Armenia does not seem to be ready to accept any condition for the moment.

¹³ RFE/RL Armenia Report, March 25, 2004

¹⁴ Associated Press Worldstream, March 26, 2004

¹⁵ Ans TV, April 14, 2004

The visit of President İlham Aliyev to Turkey in the mid-April has been successful. President Ahmet Necdet Sezer summarized Turkish position by saying that Turkey believes that the conflict must be resolved peacefully in accordance with the principles of international law and in a stage-by-stage manner.¹⁶ Stage-by-stage manner should probably mean that the negotiation process will be divided into stages and in each stage Azerbaijan and Armenia will cede some concession to each other, reaching at the end a final agreement.

After President Aliyev visit in an interview to the Anatolian Agency Foreign Minister Abdullah Gül restating that border between Turkey and Armenia would not be opened said that Nagorno Karabakh issue should not be abandoned, it should be discussed solved. Gül also said that Turkey was trying to play a catalyst role and he is hoping that foreign ministers of Turkey, Armenia and Azerbaijan would hold a trilateral meeting possibly during NATO summit in Istanbul in June 29th.¹⁷

Foreign Minister of Armenia Mr. Oskanian reacting to the statement of Mr Gül said that there have been meetings on foreign ministers' level amid the three countries, during which regional issues were discussed. "But as regards the mediation of the Karabakh issue by Turkey in particular, it will make no sense, for Turkey, in view of the policy it conducts and the current situation, is just incapable of playing a role of an impartial mediator."¹⁸ In other words, according to Armenian Foreign Minister Turkey cannot hold a mediatory position since she shares the opinions of Azerbaijan.

The Armenian Minister also mentioned their dissatisfaction with the Turkish government by saying that the relations with the Turkish government have initially had positive flow, and three meetings of Turkish and Armenian foreign ministers have taken place since 2003. "The first meeting (Madrid, June 2003) was good, the second (New York, September 2003) was not as good, and the third (Brussels, December 2003) was bad. First we concentrated upon bilateral issues. During the second meeting, Karabakh has become an issue of negotiations, and in the third meeting Karabakh became a precondition for normalization (of Turkish-Armenian

¹⁶ *Zaman*, April 13, 2004

¹⁷ *Anatolian Agency*, April 19, 2004

¹⁸ *Azg*, April 24, 2004

relations). Thus we ended up in the initial positions, just like the state of affairs was during the reign of the former Turkish government", said Mr. Oskanian.¹⁹

The discontent of Armenian government towards Turkey resulted in withdrawal of President Robert Kocharian from the NATO Summit to be held in Istanbul on June 29th. The Armenian president's press secretary pointed out that the reason for Robert Kocharyan's decision not to take part in the NATO summit in Istanbul is the "current state of Armenian-Turkish relations."²⁰ Nevertheless, other factors should be taken into account since the NATO Summit is irrelevant to the Turkish-Armenian relations and the Armenian President had already participated to a NATO Summit in 1999 when the Turkish-Armenian relations are no different than today. According to the Foreign Minister Abdullah Gül, Kocharian decision targeted domestic politics.²¹ In fact Kocharian's position is shaken through the demonstrations, which have been going on for months. Kocharian might have attempted to acquire sympathy of the radical groups via his hard stance against Turkey. Moreover, Kocharian might be fulfilling the wishes of Russian Federation, as President Putin will not participate, either to the NATO Summit.

4. Armenian Foreign Minister's Views on the Relations with Turkey

Some of the statements made by the Armenian Foreign Minister to journalists shed some light upon the expectations of his country from Turkey.

Although practically no result has been obtained from the meetings he had with his Turkish counterparts in the last two years, Mr. Oskanian believes these meetings to be useful. Regarding this he has said "my meetings with Turkish Foreign Minister Abdullah Gül last year let us believe that our dialogue is not over and we can achieve positive results if persistent work is carried out."²² The Armenian Minister believes that there are no insurmountable problems in relations with Turkey and is of the conviction that due

¹⁹ Azg, April 27, 2004

²⁰ Medimax News Agency, May 10, 2004

²¹ Anatolian Agency, May 20, 2004

²² Medimax News Agency, January 14, 2004

to different reasons the Turkish authorities have a more serious desire to make positive changes in Armenian-Turkish relations.²³

The Armenian Foreign Minister has also stated that the European Union can contribute to the normalization of relations, especially regarding the opening of borders. Oskanian went on to say they believed that the European Union should express in clearer terms the condition that Turkey must open her borders with all her neighbors, including Armenia, before negotiations are initiated.²⁴

As for the issue of the genocide allegations, Oskanian said, "we have expressed several times that there is such a problem and it will remain on our agenda. But the matter of recognition of the genocide by Turkey has never been a pre-condition and will never be for the normalization of our relations". He added, "I think that the establishment of diplomatic relations with Turkey will promote the discussion of the problem of genocide at the state level. Today, as there are no such relations, we are unable to put this problem on the agenda at the state level and to discuss it."²⁵

The claim that the genocide issue is not being brought on the agenda because there is no diplomatic relations between the two states is difficult to believe. This topic can be discussed as the other issues are discussed despite the absence of diplomatic relations and both sides can voice their positions. The real reason behind the Armenian reluctance to bring up this issue is the Turkish sensitivity on the allegations of genocide and Armenian fear that it may impact negatively on bilateral developments they attach particular importance to, such as the opening of the borders and the establishing of diplomatic relations.

II. United States and the Armenians

1- President Bush's Statement of April 24

During the 2000 presidential campaign, Mr. George Bush, then candidate, in a written statement, referred to the "genocidal campaign" perpetrated against the Armenians. This event led to the expectations that President Bush might conceptualize the 1915 events as "genocide" in his statement of April 24. Nonetheless,

²³ *Haykakan Zhamanak*, December 13, 2003

²⁴ *Radio France Internationale*, December 12, 2003

²⁵ *Haykakan Zhamanak*, December 13, 2003

President Bush had not used the term in his statements despite the written demands of the Armenians and supporting senators and congressmen.

169 representatives and 23 senators have asked the President to use the word "genocide" in his 2004 statement. The President did not oblige,²⁶ yet he used expressions like "most horrible tragedies of the 20th century" and "the annihilation of as many as 1.5 million Armenians" which easily could evoke genocide.

On the other hand, President Bush in his message commended individuals in Armenia and Turkey who have worked to support peace and reconciliation, including through the Turkish-Armenian Reconciliation Commission, and called on Armenia and Turkey to restore their economic, political, and cultural ties.

The main Armenian organizations in the US had negative reactions to the President's statement. The Armenian National Committee of America (ANCA), a Dashnak institution, stated that the President again resorted to the use of evasive and euphemistic terminology to obscure the reality of Turkey's Genocide against the Armenian people. ANCA Director Hamparian said that the President's failure to honor his campaign promise to recognize the Armenian Genocide is compounded by the fact that, in this statement, he commends Turkish-Armenian Reconciliation Commission, which was created to block international recognition of the Armenian genocide.²⁷

The Armenian Assembly of America, which usually cooperates with the government, stated that the President's statement used language to clearly define the events but once again stopped short of using the word genocide.²⁸

2. The US Presidential Election and Armenians

Prior to presidential elections in the US, the Armenian Diaspora always attempts to convince candidates to adopt a pro-Armenian stance. In this context, Diaspora organizations asked the candidates to express their attitude regarding the official

²⁶ *White House.gov.(Press release)*, April 24, 2004

²⁷ *ANCA, Press Release*, April 24, 2004

²⁸ *AAA Press Release*, April 26, 2004

recognition of the 1915 "genocide", the blockade of Armenia by Turkey, the right to self-determination of Karabakh etc. "Are you going to pay an official visit to Yerevan in case elected President?" was also asked. According to the Armenian media the presidential candidates did not give at the beginning clear answers to these questions.²⁹ However in time it's understood that many candidates were in favor of accepting the allegation of the Armenian genocide.

One of the candidates, former Commander of NATO Forces, Wesley Clark sent a letter to the American Armenian Society on December 12, 2003 in which he stated, "What happened in 1915 was a genocide."³⁰ There is no doubt that this can be explained by political self interest because the same Wesley Clark had enjoyed good relations with Turkey as NATO Commander and signed a letter aimed at defeating a pro-genocide motion in Congress in October 2000. This was such a change of attitude that even some Armenian observers did not find Clark's action sincere.³¹ General Clark later dropped out of the race for the Presidency.

Another candidate, Howard Dean, sent a letter to the Armenian National Committee of America,³² promising to officially recognize the Genocide of the Armenians in Ottoman Turkey if he is elected. Another candidate, who is known to be an orthodox Jew, Joseph Lieberman, reminded his Armenian electors that he had participated in pro-Armenian initiatives in the Congress several times.³³

John Kerry who has emerged as the official Democratic Party candidate against President Bush is also known to be a supporter of the Armenian views. Last year he was among the 167 Congressmen who urged George Bush to use the word "genocide" in his traditional April 24 message. Kerry, with 5 other colleagues appealed to President Bush urging him to influence Turkish Prime Minister Erdoğan to remove Turkey's blockade of Armenia.³⁴ Senator Kerry, in a written statement on April 22, 2004 said that he was thanking Armenian Americans for their persistence in the

²⁹ *Pan Armenian Network*, January 21, 2004

³⁰ www.clark04.com

³¹ *The California Courier*, December 20, 2003

³² *PanArmenian News*, February 9, 2004

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ *PanArmenian News*, February 6 2004

One could not say that all the American Armenians are chauvinist or otherwise extremist.

struggle to gain international recognition of this atrocity (i.e genocide allegations), he was proud of his work with the Armenian American community to gain broader recognition of the Armenian Genocide; he was

joining Armenian Americans and Armenians worldwide in mourning the victims of the Armenian Genocide; and he was calling on governments and people everywhere to formally recognize this tragedy.

Taking into account the strong commitment of Senator Kerry for the Armenian genocide allegations it's normal that militant American Armenians vote for him in the coming presidential elections. As a matter of fact an Armenian columnist entitled his article "Kerry Says Genocide; Bush Doesn't; A Clear Choice for Armenians."³⁵

One could not say that all the American Armenians are chauvinist or otherwise extremist. There are certainly hundreds and thousands of people of Armenian origin who have migrated to the US three or four generations ago and have adopted American values. It is normal that these people would rather vote in line with the policy proposals of the candidates especially those concerning economy and would not give priority to the events happened nearly a century ago.

3. Some Armenian Complaints

In the draft budget proposed for fiscal year 2005 the US Government allocated 8.75 million dollars in military aid to Azerbaijan while granting 2.75 million dollars to Armenia.

Armenian organizations in the US have claimed that this proposal violates the principle that there is to be parity between Azerbaijan and Armenia in military aid. Prior to the fiscal year of 2002, military assistance to Azerbaijan was prohibited according to Section 907 of the Freedom Support Act, a provision that restricted U.S. assistance to Azerbaijan due to its ongoing blockades of Armenia and Karabagh. Following the terrorist attacks on

³⁵ Harut Sassounian, *California Courier Online*, April 29, 2004

September 11, 2001, Azerbaijan conditioned its cooperation with the United States in the war against terrorism on the removal of Section 907. The Administration pressed Congress to provide the President with the authority to waive Section 907 annually. Armenians claim that part of the understanding reached between the White House and Congress was an unwritten agreement that military aid levels to Armenia and Azerbaijan would remain even.³⁶

Those Members of Congress who defend Armenian interests acted for establishing parity in military aid granted to Azerbaijan and Armenia. Congressional Armenian Caucus Co-Chair Frank Pallone called on his colleagues to co-sign a letter to President Bush expressing concern about the decision. The letter stated that the Congressional signatories "strongly believe that your request in this area would undermine the stability in the South Caucasus region, and would weaken the ongoing peace negotiations regarding the Nagorno Karabakh conflict."³⁷

In fact the military aid granted by the US to Azerbaijan and Armenia is more of a symbolic nature. As stated by the Armenian Defense Minister, it is difficult to believe that Azerbaijan's armed forces would get four times stronger than the Armenian forces as a result of this aid.³⁸ It is understood that American Armenians were objecting to this aid because they always try to disrupt any development that may be in the interest of Azerbaijan (and Turkey).

Another problem for the American Armenians is the "Permanent Normal Trade Relations Status" that the USA grants to some states that allow them to enjoy lower tariffs and greater access to US Government credit facilities. This status is rarely granted to states that had emerged from what was once the USSR. The Armenian Diaspora undertook great efforts for this status to be extended to Armenia and House of Representatives took a decision to this effect in November 2003. However, the Armenian Diaspora was disappointed when the Senate did not include Armenia in the trade bill it passed on March 4.³⁹

Another source of disappointment for the Armenians living in the USA was the State Department's annual human rights report on

³⁶ *Armenian National Committee of America (ANCA) Press Release*, February 16, 2004

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ *RFE/RL*, February 6, 2004

³⁹ *Armenian National Committee of America, Press Release*, March 4, 2004

Turkey that used the term "alleged genocide of Armenians". The Armenian National Committee of America called this the most recent instance of complicity in Turkey's denial of the Armenian Genocide.⁴⁰

On the other hand the Dashnaks objected to the fact that in the web site of the State Department no mention was found of the genocide in the section dealing specifically with Armenia. Armenians applied to the State Department requesting that this "serious error" be corrected.⁴¹

4. National Geographic Magazine and "The Rebirth of Armenia"

The National Geographic Magazine in its issue of March 2004 published an article titled "The Rebirth of Armenia" which stated that, among other things, in 1913 the Ottoman Empire had an Armenian population of about two million, fewer than 100,000 remained in 1920, it was systematic slaughter, it was the 20th century's first major experience of genocide etc., The article stated also that dozens of Turkish diplomats and nationals were "allegedly" murdered by Armenian terrorists.

Mount Ararat is particularly emphasized in the article. It has been claimed that the Armenians have been pondering Ararat from the beginning of civilization (!) but since 1920 Turks have controlled this national icon. The article cites Vardan Oskanian, Armenian Foreign Minister saying sentimentally "Every morning we look at it (Ararat), It is only 25 miles from this building, and we feel we can almost touch it. But we can't go there. (Ararat is not forbidden to Armenians) Ararat is our pride and our frustration. Our history. The unfulfilled dreams that drive us". It's obvious that the article tries to give the impression that in the past Ararat belonged to Armenia, which is not the case.

The article is so biased that it gave the impression of being an advertisement. The Armenian Ambassador to Washington, Mr. Kirakosian's, feverish thanks to the magazine conforms with this impression.⁴²

⁴⁰ ANCA, Press Release, March 4, 2004

⁴¹ Asbarez, March 2, 2004

⁴² Embassy of the Republic of Armenia, Press Release, March 16, 2004

The Turkish Embassy in Washington and distributor of National Geographic in Turkey had warned the magazine about the mistakes and exaggerations contained in the article. As no correction was made, this article is not published in the Turkish version of the National Geographic.⁴³

III. Canada and Armenian Allegations

The longtime efforts of the Armenian Diaspora in Canada for the recognition of the so-called Armenian Genocide has been fruitful; and the Canadian Parliament adopted a motion on April 21, 2004 that says, "This House acknowledges the Armenian genocide of 1915 and condemns this act as a crime against humanity."⁴⁴

Foreign Minister Bill Graham before the vote in a letter to the members of Parliament stated that cooperation between Turkey and Canada exists in several fields and Canada should maintain good relations with Turkey, which is a NATO ally.⁴⁵ According to press reports, the Canadian Chamber of Commerce lobbied that the members of Parliament should consider the possibility that Canadian companies like Bombardier Aerospace and SNC Lavalin could lose out to European competitors for mega projects such as the extension of the Ankara subway system.⁴⁶ Nevertheless, these political and economic considerations did not have much influence on the members of the Parliament.

After the vote, Foreign Minister Bill Graham issued a statement saying that the motion will not alter the official Canadian government position that while the events in question at the start of the 20th century were a tragedy, they did not constitute genocide.⁴⁷

The Turkish Foreign Ministry in a statement on April 22, 2004 condemned this decision taken under the influence of marginal opinions, drew attention to the risk of hatred among the people from different origins, emphasized the fact that it would not benefit neither the Armenians in Canada nor those in Armenia and expressed that Canadian politicians would be responsible for the negative consequences that this decision could bring.

⁴³ *Milliyet*, March 4, 2004

⁴⁴ *Armenian National Committee of Canada*, Press Release, April 21, 2004

⁴⁵ *Hürriyet*, April 22, 2004

⁴⁶ *The Globe and Mail*, April 22, 2004

⁴⁷ *RFE/RL*, April 23, 2004

The Canadian parliament has taken this decision with the intention of satisfying its citizens of Armenian origin. As Canadian citizens of Turkish origin did strongly oppose this decision, Canadian Parliament favored Armenians and discriminated against its Turkish citizens. A Canadian newspaper stated in this respect "A multicultural country like Canada has to be careful about allowing ancient grievances to be played out such that they push foreign policy in a particular direction. Once that starts to happen in a country like this, it won't end."⁴⁸

From the perspective of international law, we should be reminded that parliaments do not have competence to take such a decision. According to the 1948 United Nations Convention for the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, Article 9, disputes relating to the responsibility of a State should be submitted to the international Court of Justice and not to national parliaments.

IV. France and the Armenians

1. President Chirac's Statement

The French President Jacques Chirac, during a press conference on the European Union Enlargement on April 29, 2004, answered the question whether recognition of the Armenian "Genocide" is a pre-condition for the access of Turkey to the Union or not, that it is an issue between Turkey and Armenia; he added that he is content to see the positive developments in Turkish-Armenian relations and the future in the bilateral relations could not be evaluated according to the past.⁴⁹

The Council of Coordination for the Armenian Organizations in France published a statement declaring that they were surprised by the statement of the President, France had passed a law recognizing the Armenian Genocide during the term of Chirac; and asked why the President had approved this law if it was a matter of bilateral relations between Turkey and Armenia. The Declaration also accused the President of washing his hands of the annihilation of Armenians in Turkey.

⁴⁸ *The Globe and Mail*, April 27, 2004

⁴⁹ *Le Monde*, April 30, 2004

2. French Socialists and The Armenians

The first secretary of France's Socialist Party, François Hollande and President of Dashnaktsoutiun (France) Mourad Papazian announced in a joint statement on June 3, 2004⁵⁰ that to give a date to Turkey for the beginning of the accession talks to EU should be contingent, in addition to the Copenhagen criteria, to Ankara's recognition of the Armenian "genocide" as stated in the resolution of the European Parliament dated June 18, 1987.

The joint statement claimed also that the reforms in Turkey were inadequate, the major role of the military in the state affairs is in contradiction with the democratic principles of Europe, minority rights were not respected particularly in the case of Kurds, and Turkey does not abide by the Copenhagen Criteria. The two sides demanded Turkey to recognize the Armenian Genocide, which was committed by the "Ottoman Government". The Socialist Party announced that they would propose a draft law concerning punishment of those who deny the Armenian Genocide. The sides also called for voting for the Socialist candidates in the elections of European Parliament on June 18, 2004.

What is amazing in that matter is that the French Socialist Party considers as normal to have an electoral agreement with an Armenian Party which recently claimed that Turkey's eastern Anatolia provinces be annexed to Armenia.

V. The European Union and the Armenians

1. The European Court of Justice Verdict

The Euro-Armenia Association in Marseilles applied to the European Court of Justice in October 2003 claiming that the status of candidate for EU membership given to Turkey at the Helsinki Summit in 1999 was in violation of the June 18, 1987 resolution of the European Parliament on the "Armenian genocide" and therefore the Turkish candidacy must be annulled.⁵¹

Upon Turkey's application for membership in the then European Economic Community in 1987, the European Parliament had adopted a resolution calling for a political solution to the Armenian question. The resolution stated that the tragic events of 1915-1917

⁵⁰ For full text of the joint declaration see: *Comité de Defense de la Cause Arménienne*, June 3, 2004

⁵¹ *Anatolian Agency*, March 4, 2004

constituted genocide within the meaning of the UN Convention on genocide, however Turkey could not be held responsible for the tragedy experienced by the Armenians of the Ottoman Empire. The same resolution stressed that neither political, nor legal or material claims against present-day Turkey could be derived from the recognition of this historical event as an act of genocide.

These resolutions asked the Council of Ministers to obtain an acknowledgement of the genocide from the Turkish Government. It also stated that the refusal by the present day Turkish Government to acknowledge the genocide would constitute an insurmountable obstacle to the consideration of the possibility of Turkish accession to the Union.

We must emphasize that the resolutions adopted by European Parliament are advisory and display the ideas and tendencies of that organization; they are not mandatory for the member states. Consequently, although the 1987 resolution demands it, the EU Council of Ministers never asked Turkey to recognize the Armenian "genocide". As well, the Copenhagen Criteria do not contain such a demand.

In the verdict regarding the case of the Armenian Association in Marseilles, the European Court of Justice stated that the application of the Armenian plaintiff did not have any legal base and rejected it stressing that the decision of the European Parliament of 1987 was "only and fully political" and that this recommendatory decision did not have a power of sanction. The European Court of Justice said that the European Parliament could change its resolution anytime and that it did not have any legal influence.⁵²

This verdict is important because it makes clear that the 1987 resolution of the European Parliament would not obstruct Turkish adhesion to the European Union. It is therefore a serious setback for the Armenian extremists. Yet, this ruling will not prevent the European Parliament in the future from passing similar resolutions referring to the 1987 resolution. In fact, the two recently adopted resolutions that we will talk about in the next paragraph reference the 1987 resolution.

⁵² *Ibid*

2. The European Parliament and the Armenians

The European Parliament has mentioned Armenian matters in two of its recent resolutions. The first of these is "EU Policy Towards South Caucasus" dated February 26, 2004, and the other one is the "Progress Toward Accession by Turkey" dated April 1, 2004.

In the Resolution on the Progress Towards Accession by Turkey, the European Parliament "request Turkey to reopen the borders with Armenia and to promote good neighbourly relations with Armenia, to work together to promote equitable solutions to the regional conflicts and to take any action that would stand in the way of a historic reconciliation". The Parliament also "would like a dialogue to be established between Turkish and Armenian academics, social and non-governmental organizations in order to overcome the tragic experiences of the past as has been expressed in its earlier resolutions (reference is made here to the resolution of 18 June 1987).

In the Resolution on EU Policy Towards South Caucasus, the European Parliament recommends the Council "to urge Turkey to be fully committed to its candidate status and to take the necessary steps to establish good neighbourly relations with the countries, with particular regard to the lifting the trade restrictions and the gradual reopening of the land border with Armenia". On the other hand the European Parliament "reiterates its position set out in its Resolution of 18 June 1987 on a political solution of the Armenian question, call on Turkey and Armenia to promote good neighbourliness in order to defuse tension and calls on Turkish and Armenian academics, social organizations and NGOs to embark on a dialogue with each other in order to overcome the tragic experiences of the past".

As can be seen, these resolutions are Armenian inspired. However they do not mention directly the genocide claims and are contented with a reference to the resolution of June 18, 1987.

VI. The 29th Congress of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation and Turkey

The Chairman of the Dashnak Party, (Armenian Revolutionary Federation-ARF) Hrand Markaryan strongly criticized Turkey during his opening speech of the 29th Party Congress held on February 6, 2004 in Yerevan. Some excerpts follow:

"The international recognition of the Genocide and the liberation of Western Armenia (i.e. eastern Anatolia) are the very demands" (of the Dashnaks).

"We will continue our struggle; we will continue our pressure on Turkey until final victory, until the Genocide is internationally recognized, until United Armenia is created."

"Today's Turkey is the same Turkey that planned and perpetrated the Genocide."... "Turkey is the same Turkey of yesteryear with its aggressive and pan-Turkic goals."

"Armenian-Turkish reconciliation, the opening of the Armenia-Turkish border are irrelevant points of agenda so long as Turkey denies the fact of Armenian Genocide."

" We oppose any relations between Armenia and Turkey..."⁵³

Mainly, two points stand out in this harsh statement. The first one is the call of the leader of the Dashnak Party for the liberation of Eastern Anatolia, in other words the annexation of some parts of Turkish territory by Armenia. The second point is the opposition of the Dashnaks to improving relations or even to establishing any kind of ties with Turkey as long as she does not recognize the alleged genocide.

Yet these views do not conform to the policy that is currently being implemented by the Armenian Government as this Government has not made establishing normal relations with Turkey conditional on the acknowledgement of the "genocide" and has never openly voiced any territorial claims from Turkey.

The speaker of the Armenian Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated about Mr. Markaryan's speech; "those are strictly the ARF's own positions and this is not the first time that they have expressed them publicly. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs disagrees with many of the positions expressed there and they do not reflect Armenia's foreign policy. It is true that the ARF is a member of the coalition, but foreign relations are constitutionally formulated by the President of the Republic."⁵⁴

In his speech Mr. Markaryan addressed also to the irregularities during the last elections, in other words he indirectly questioned the legitimacy of the Armenian Parliament. This move, adding to

⁵³ www.yerkir.am, February 7, 2004

⁵⁴ Press Release, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia, February 6, 2004

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the criticism of the Government's foreign policy brought up the possibility of the Dashnaks leaving the coalition. Yet while the Dashnaks displayed no desire to leave the government, the other members of the coalition did not seem willing to oust the Dashnaks either, despite the fact that even without them they would still have the necessary majority to govern.

The declaration that was published after the ARF Congress, contrary to the Markaryan speech, did not refer to irregularities during the recent election, to "United Armenia" and to the possible re-opening of the Turkish-Armenian border.⁵⁵ It seems that the Dashnaks, taking into account the dissatisfaction caused by Mr. Markaryan's speech, preferred to soften their rhetoric.

VI. Developments in Turkey

1. The Second Congress Of Armenian Studies

The Second Congress of Armenian Studies⁵⁶ organized by the Institute for Armenian Research and the Ankara Chamber of Commerce was held on 29-30 May 2004 in Ankara.

About 130 papers concerning nearly all aspects of the Armenian Issue, the Armenians and Armenia were presented to the Congress. The high number of the papers and the wide range of topics analyzed pointed to the interest in Turkey for Armenian issues.

The Patriarch of Istanbul, Mesrop II sent a congratulation message to the Congress.

The papers presented at the Congress will be published in a book, as in the case of the first congress.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ RFE/RL, February 18, 2004

⁵⁶ The First Congress on Armenian Studies was held on 22 and 21 of April 2002.

⁵⁷ Ermeni Araştırmaları 1. Türkiye Kongresi Tebliğleri, (The Presentations of the First Congress of Armenian Studies, Three Volumes) Published by ASAM Ermeni Araştırmaları Enstitüsü ISBN 975-6769-88-2

2. Publication of the book "Armenians: Exile and Emigration"

The book, entitled "Armenians: Exile and Emigration," written by Prof. Dr. Hikmet Özdemir, Prof. Dr. Kemal Çiçek, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ömer Turan, Dr. Ramazan Çalık and Prof. Dr. Yusuf Halaçoğlu was published by the Turkish Historical Society in April. The book is composed of three main chapters, namely the Armenian Population in the Ottoman State, Emigration and Relocation to Syria, and the Armenians after the Emigration.

The Armenian population of the Ottoman Empire is calculated according to foreign sources as 1.5 to 1.7 million, about 500,000 of which were subjected to emigration. Many of them returned after the First World War but emigrated again during the Turkish War of Independence. This new finding disproves the widely accepted Armenian allegation that 1.5 million Armenians died or were killed during the emigration.

The book, which is based on foreign sources that were almost unused previously, constitutes an important step in the scientific research of the Armenian issue.

3. Meeting of the Turkish and Armenian Scholars

A "Viennese Armenian-Turkish Platform" was created in March 2004 in order to study the "Turkish-Armenian Issue" with scholarly methods and using historical documents.

Two scientists each from the Turkish Historical Society and the Armenian Academy of Sciences will discuss the issue. The moderator will be Prof. Dr. Wolf Dieter Bihl from Austria. Prof. Dr. Yusuf Halacoglu, President of the Turkish Historical Society, and Prof. Dr. Hikmet Özdemir, chairmen of the Armenian unit of the Society will participate from Turkey; Armenia will be represented by Prof. Dr. Lavrenti Barseghian (Director of Yerevan Genocide Museum), and Prof. Dr. Ashot Melkonian (Armenian Academy of Sciences, Institute of History).

Each side is to submit a pre-determined number of documents to each other through the Viennese Armenian-Turkish Platform and no document will be accepted afterwards. In Spring 2005 a meeting will be organized, at which the documents will be discussed. This meeting will be recorded and the conclusions published.

This initiative derives its importance from the fact that the Turkish and Armenian historians will come together in a scientific environment for the first time.