

REVIEW OF  
**ARMENIAN STUDIES**

A Quarterly Journal of History, Politics and International Relations

vol **4**

**ARTICLES**

Facts and Comments

**Ömer Engin LÜTEM**

Reflections of the Second Proclamation of the Ottoman  
Parliamentary System on Eastern Anatolia and Its  
Effect on the Armenian-Kurdish Relations

**Fatih ÜNAL**

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## REVIEW OF ARMENIAN STUDIES

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## EDITORIAL NOTE

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In the first article of this issue, entitled 'Facts and Comments', the relations between Turkey and Armenia as well as some developments regarding the Armenian genocide allegations in Bulgaria, Argentina, Canada, France, Belgium, the United States, the Netherlands, Czech Republic and Poland in the first half of 2006 are covered. What is more, the violations of freedom of speech in the United States within the context of Armenian question are emphasized.

In his article entitled 'Reflections of the Second Proclamation of the Ottoman Parliamentary System on Eastern Anatolia and Its Effect on the Armenian-Kurdish Relations', Assist. Prof. Dr. Fatih Ünal explains the Armenian perception of the re-proclamation of the Ottoman parliamentary system and the implications of this new regime on the Armenian-Kurdish relations in Eastern Anatolia.

Mustafa Serdar Palabıyık analyzes the establishment and activities of the French Legion d'Orient, which had mainly been composed of Armenian soldiers, until November 1916 in his article 'Establishment and Activities of French Legion d'Orient (Eastern Legion) in the Light of French Archival Documents'. The activities of this legion up until the end of First World War would be examined later.

In her article entitled 'Turkish-Armenian Relations in the Shadow of 1915', Assist. Prof. Dr. Yelda Demirağ comments on the historical development of the Armenian Question and its implication on the contemporary Turkish-Armenian relations.

German Federal Parliament adopted a resolution recognizing the Armenian genocide allegations on June 2005. In his article entitled 'On the Reasons of the German Federal Parliament's Recognition of the So-Called Armenian Genocide and the Role of Political Protestantism', Burak Gümüř examines the underlying reasons of the adoption of this resolution and the role of political Protestantism within this context.

As a result of the increasing interest on the Armenian question, many universities in Turkey organized panels, seminars or conferences. In this issue, there are essays reviewing the conferences organized by İstanbul University, Bilgi University (İstanbul), Erciyes University (Kayseri), Marmara University (İstanbul) and Başkent University (Ankara).

There are also two reviews of the books written by Samuel Weems entitled *Armenia: Secret of A "Christian" Terrorist State*, and edited by Mustafa Çalık entitled *The Armenian Genocide Allegations: When Improper Calculation Departed from Talat and Relocation* as well as a list of recent publications.

In this issue there are three archival and two contemporary documents regarding the Armenian question, which give significant insights to the reader.

With best wishes...

*The Editor*



# FACTS AND COMMENTS

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## **Abstract:**

This article will assess the bilateral relations between Turkey and Armenia during the first six months of 2006. Furthermore, some developments pertaining to Armenian genocide allegations that took place in Argentina, Canada, France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Bulgaria, the United States, the Czech Republic and Poland will be examined. Thirdly, certain attempted infringements on the freedom of expression in the United States regarding the Armenian Question will be discussed.

**Key Words:** Turkey, Armenia, Argentina, Canada, France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Bulgaria, the United States of America, the Czech Republic, Poland, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Abdullah Gul, Robert Kocharian, Vartan Oskanian, President George W. Bush, President Chirac, Francois Hollande, Douste-Blazy, Genocide

## **Öz:**

Bu makalede 15 Şubat – 15 Haziran 2006 tarihleri arasında Türkiye ile Ermenistan arasındaki ikili ilişkiler ile Ermeni soykırım iddiaları hakkında Arjantin, Kanada, Fransa, Belçika, Hollanda, Bulgaristan, Amerika Birleşik Devletleri, Çekoslovakya ve Polonya'daki bazı gelişmeler ele alınacaktır. Üçüncü bahis olarak da Ermeni sorunu bağlamında Amerika Birleşik Devletleri'nde bazı ifade özgürlüğünün ihlali girişimlerinden bahsedilecektir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Türkiye, Ermenistan, Arjantin, Kanada, Fransa, Belçika, Hollanda, Bulgaristan, ABD, Çekoslovakya, Polonya, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Abdullah Gül, Robert Koçaryan, Vartan Oskanyan, George W. Bush, Jacques Chirac, Francois Hollande, Douste-Blazy



## I. TURKEY-ARMENIA BILATERAL RELATIONS

**D**uring the first half of 2006 we are examining the Foreign Ministers of the two countries did not meet. The last time they had met was in New York in September 2004. That means that as of end of June 2006 the foreign ministers of the two countries have had no contact for 22 months. The Armenian side avoids a fresh meeting of the two Foreign Ministers, saying that such meetings are aimed to convince the world that negotiations are taking place between Turkey and Armenia, that such meetings yield no results, and that Turkey is committed to defend Azerbaijan's interests. However, what they think in reality is obviously that as the European Union shares their demands from Turkey (reopening of the border and establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries) and that these demands would probably be met by Turkey during the EU negotiations process; there is no need of meeting of the Foreign Ministers. In fact, Foreign Minister Oskanian openly says that they expect the EU to put pressure on Turkey on these issues. He reiterated that at a press conference he held in Washington in early April.<sup>1</sup>

Despite this lull in official contacts there are news reports indicating that Turkish and Armenian officials have met from time to time.<sup>2</sup> Turkish Foreign Ministry Spokesman Namık Tan has said, in reply to a question during his weekly press conference, that after receiving President Kocharian's reply<sup>3</sup> to the Turkish Prime Minister a negotiating process was initiated at the level of the Foreign Ministry deputy undersecretaries to determine whether there is common ground on which bilateral relations could make progress. He indicated that three rounds of such meetings have taken place and that preparations are under way for the next round. Meanwhile, press reports make it clear that at the rounds held until now disagreements ensued mainly from the "genocide" issue and that the Armenian side wants this problem to be privately discussed among historians at conferences rather than between the authorities.<sup>4</sup>

In reaction to the Turkish Foreign Ministry spokesman's statement, Armenia's Deputy Foreign Minister Gegam Garibjanyan said that at that moment they were not dealing with such issues, that meetings were held between the two sides last year but not this year; and that the Armenian side's stance is known by everybody.

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1 ABhaber, 2 April 2006

2 Noyan Tapan, 7 March 2006

3 Review of Armenian Studies, number 7-8, pp. 24, 25

4 Milliyet, 30 May 2006

He pointed out that Armenia seeks unconditional reopening of the Turkish-Armenian border, establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries and recognition of the Armenian “genocide”.

Foreign Minister Oskanian said on that subject: “There is nothing secret in these meetings.<sup>5</sup> The talks between the two states were not initiated by the letter of the Turkish Prime Minister (Erdoğan). Meetings were held before that.”<sup>6</sup> Thus he tried to create the impression that the latest contacts were insignificant. Oskanian has acted in this manner because negotiating with Turkey behind closed doors conflicts with the impression the Armenian Government had given its people who were convinced that the government was pursuing a hard-line policy of not making any concessions when dealing with Turkey.

There is another reason as well for the Armenian Government’s reaction to the revelation that talks have been held between the two countries. Obviously the Armenian Government is wary of the possibility that the European Union bodies would see these talks as a positive development and ease – partly if not totally—the pressure it puts on Turkey to have the Turkish-Armenian border reopened and the “genocide” recognized.

During the period we are examining, officials of the two countries have made certain statements on the existing problems.

Turkish Foreign Minister Abdullah Gül focused mostly on the genocide allegations. In a statement he made to a Spanish newspaper, *El Pais*,<sup>7</sup> Gül reiterated the Turkish position regarding the genocide allegations. He explained that in Turkey it is not a crime to use the expression, “Armenian genocide”. He stressed however that the genocide allegations were a lie, a propaganda effort, and that no such genocide had occurred in reality. He pointed out that during World War I the Armenians had staged an uprising and that the Ottoman Government had to take measures. He expressed regret over the loss of human lives. He stressed that it would not be right to speak of genocide nearly a hundred years later. However, he added, incidents of the past could be studied and that the Turkish archives were open.

On another occasion, in reply to a question posed to him by a deputy at the

5 PanArmenian, 8 June 2006

6 Regnum, 8 June 2006

7 An Armenews item dated 6 March 2006 quoting from the 6 March 2006 issue of *Al Pais*

Turkish Grand National Assembly (TBMM)<sup>8</sup>, the Turkish foreign minister said that a number of EU countries had passed resolutions recognizing the Armenian genocide allegations. These decisions are entirely of a political nature and they are not legally binding, he said. The European Parliament's 1987 decision on the so-called Armenian genocide too was of the same nature, and, in fact, the case an Armenian organization opened against Turkey at the European Court of Justice on the basis of that decision was rejected by the Court on the grounds that the European Parliament decision in question was political rather than legal, he stressed.<sup>9</sup>

Meanwhile, Armenian politicians have commented on the existing problems with Turkey quite frequently. Given below is a summary of the highlights of these statements:

During the Armenia-EU Inter-Parliamentary Cooperation Meeting, President Kocharian reiterated, "Armenia is ready to establish partnership with Turkey without any preconditions".<sup>10</sup> To those not familiar with the details of the issues at hand, the term "establishing partnership without any conditions" sounds pleasant indeed. However, in reality it involves some serious hazards. This is because if, without putting forth any preconditions, Turkey established relations with Armenia and reopened its border with that country, Armenia, having resolved its problems with Turkey without making any concessions, would consider it would be all right to continue refusing to recognize Turkey's current borders and to make further genocide allegations. Furthermore, since there would be no reason for it to be wary of Turkey anymore it would start acting in an even more intransigent manner on the Karabagh issue.

In a message he issued on the April 24 "Victims of the Armenian Genocide Remembrance Day" Kocharian said, "Ottoman Turkey and its successor carry full responsibility for that crime (the Armenian "genocide"). Since the Republic of Turkey is the successor of the Ottoman Empire it is obvious that the Armenian president has directed an accusation at Turkey.

Relocation of the Armenians began in 1915 and ended in 1916. Therefore, the responsibility for the relocation lies with the Ottoman governments of that time alone. And, legally, the Ottoman Empire ceased to exist with the proclamation

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8 Hürriyet, 1 March 2006

9 Review of Armenian Studies, Volume 2, No. 6, 2004, pp. 23-24

10 ARKA News Agency, 19 April 2006

of the Republic in Turkey in 1923. Turkey is the successor of that empire in the legal domain but not in the political one. This is because the Ankara Government brought the Ottoman Empire to an end after bitterly denouncing many of its policies. Also, from the legal standpoint it is impossible to direct accusations at Turkey due to the relocation of the Armenians because the Republic of Turkey was nonexistent at the time the relocation took place and, also, because all the problems that had emerged during the World War I were resolved with the Lausanne Treaty.

This situation causes an impasse for the Armenians since it is not possible for them to hold anybody responsible for the relocation of the Armenians. Those who took that decision and those who implemented it have all been dead – since quite a long time. The Ottoman Empire ceased long ago and there is no state in existence that could possibly be held responsible, that is, a state that might accept the genocide allegations, pay compensation and cede pieces of land to Armenia.

To get out of this impasse the Armenians have tried to hold the Republic of Turkey responsible for the relocation of the Armenians. To overcome the problem caused by the discrepancy in the dates they have tried to present the “relocation period” as 1915-1923 rather than 1915-1916, claiming that the consequences of the relocation had spanned many years after 1916. However, this argument is inconsistent since it was not the Republic of Turkey that took and implemented the relocation decision. Later, the Armenians sought new arguments. This time they put forth the claim that as long as there were those that “negated it” the “genocide” continued. According to that argument the Republic of Turkey is “responsible for the genocide” because it “negates the genocide” and, for that reason, Turkey must first recognize the “genocide”, then pay out compensation and, finally, give land to Armenia.

The source of this bizarre, illogical argument is certain Armenian writers in the Diaspora. Meanwhile, so as not to create a fresh dispute with Turkey the Armenian government has mostly remained silent on the issue of “holding Turkey responsible for the relocation”, sometimes breaking its silence to make oral comments to the effect that Turkey cannot be responsible for the relocation. Contrary to the Armenian president, Armenia’s Foreign Minister Oskanian and Deputy Foreign Minister Kirakosian indicated, in their April 24 speeches this year, that they do not hold the Republic of Turkey responsible.

Kirakosian gave an interview to daily Zaman, saying, “*We do not think that*

*the Turkish people are responsible for the 1915 incidents. The culprit was the Turkish administration of the time.*<sup>11</sup> Foreign Minister Oskanian, meanwhile, told the Armenian TV, *“I cannot repeat this often enough: Armenians are able to distinguish between the perpetrators and today’s Turkey.”*<sup>12</sup> In short, the foreign minister and his deputy have stated that Turkey is not responsible at all for the relocation phenomenon. Their statements which conflict with those of their country’s head of state must have resulted from a lack of coordination and, in the final analysis, it is the words of the head of state that are valid.

Kocharian’s attempt—for the first time—to hold Turkey responsible for the relocation, can be interpreted as a sign indicating that the Armenian policy towards Turkey will toughen and that the genocide allegations especially will intensify.

In the latest instance, in an interview he gave to a TV channel<sup>13</sup>, commenting on the statements of some Turkish figures on non-recognition of frontiers with Turkey by Armenia Foreign Minister Oskanian said that there is nothing of the kind in the RA Constitution. There is just a reference there to the Declaration of Independence saying about the historical past and values. There are no dangerous clauses for Turkey in it. Oskanian added that Turkey is not ready to establish diplomatic relations with Armenia. On the other hand he pretended that the issue of frontiers is regulated by a Protocol on diplomatic relations establishment. Saying that “Turkey wants us to make statement, while we do not know if they are ready for diplomatic relations with Armenia.”

We have to clarify some points to ensure that the Armenian Foreign Minister’s words will be fully understood.

Article 11 of the Declaration of Independence proclaimed in Armenia on 23 August 1990 says: “11. The Republic of Armenia stands in support of the task of achieving international recognition of the 1915 Genocide in Ottoman Turkey and Western Armenia.” The article in question not only upholds the genocide allegation—which Turkey definitely rejects—but also declares that Armenia would strive to have that allegation internationally recognized. Furthermore, by referring to Eastern Anatolia as “Western Armenia” it indirectly states that Armenia is not recognizing Turkey’s territorial integrity. And the Armenian Constitution has taken as a basis the national goals cited in the Declaration of Independence.

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11 Zaman, 25 April 2006

12 Armenia TV, 24 April 2006

13 Arminfo, 9 June 2006

Armenia's persistent refusal to recognize Turkey's territorial integrity is based on the Declaration of Independence and the Armenian Constitution. As long as these provisions exist it will be quite difficult for any Armenian government to officially recognize Turkey's territorial integrity. This is also the reason why Armenia has been refraining from giving official notification to the effect that it is recognizing the 13 October 1921 Kars Treaty which delineated the border between Turkey and Armenia – the treaty that was signed by the Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic.

As mentioned above, Armenian foreign minister has said that the protocol that would establish diplomatic relations between the two countries would solve the border problem as well. One understands that the two sides would also declare in this protocol that they were recognizing one another's territorial integrity. However, it would always be possible to claim afterwards that this part of the Protocol was contrary to the Declaration of Independence and to the Armenian Constitution.

It is no secret that the Kocharian administration has been trying to establish diplomatic relations with Turkey immediately while leaving the “demands for territory and compensation” issue to future Armenian governments. According to that policy today Armenia can recognize Turkey's territorial integrity but in the future under favorable circumstances, the Protocol can be abolished by Armenia on the grounds that it is against the Armenian Declaration of Independence and the Armenian Constitution. Then territory and compensation can be demanded from Turkey.

This scenario, which does not seem realistic at all, is obviously aimed at ensuring establishment of diplomatic relations with Turkey while appeasing the Armenian extremists such as the Tashnaks with the argument that Armenian territorial and compensation demands on Turkey are only being suspended, not dropped altogether.

Meanwhile, it must be noted that though many parts of the Armenian Constitution were amended last November the constitutional provisions involving the Declaration of Independence has remained intact. In other words, the Armenian practice of calling Eastern Anatolia “Western Armenia” still continues.

It is obvious that Armenia's statesmen have been displaying an increasingly negative stance towards Turkey. This is starting to make an impact on the Ar-

menian public opinion. Turkey is now being criticized more frequently than in the past, sometimes in the most unexpected fields. For example, the Armenian Consumers' Association has recently intensified the "boycott the Turkish products" campaign it had launched in 2001.<sup>14</sup> Chairman of the association, Armen Pogosian, has said, "*We should start boycotting Turkish goods in the Armenian market. This is, first of all, a problem of our national dignity, and then an economic issue. Turkish goods meet consumer standards and it is impossible to isolate fully the Armenian market from Turkish goods. Our citizens should understand that they should not buy some products, despite it is cheap, as it touches upon dignity of any Armenian, who remembers history of his people.*"<sup>15</sup> It can be seen that the Armenian Consumers' Association call for a boycott of Turkish goods is based, unfortunately, on racial hatred and not on economic considerations.

The results of the opinion poll conducted on 4 April 2006 constitute another example. Of the 1,000 youths polled, 90 percent claimed that Turkey's recognition of the "Armenian genocide" and Turkey's "returning the captured Armenian lands" should be preconditions for establishment of normal relations between Turkey and Armenia. Only 4 percent of the youths polled wanted Armenia to establish normal relations with Turkey without such preconditions. Six percent did not volunteer an opinion on this subject.<sup>16</sup>

Yet, the Armenian government itself is not putting forth any preconditions for the establishment of diplomatic relations with Turkey and for the reopening of the common border. This highly extremist stance of the young people has obviously resulted from the intense propaganda activity directed against Turkey. Since today's youngsters are tomorrow's leaders it is obvious that Turkey-Armenia relations will be problematic in the future as well if the Armenian youths continue to embrace this kind of mentality.

## II. DEVELOPMENTS RELATED TO THE GENOCIDE ALLEGATIONS

During the period we are examining, no state announced it was accepting the Armenian genocide allegations. Some states reaffirmed former decisions on that subject. In three countries parliaments' motions were presented in an attempt to

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14 Azg, 27 April 2006

15 ArmRadio.am, 25 April 2006

16 Milliyet, 12 April 2006 and Noyan Tapan, 11 April 2006

make “negation of the Armenian ‘genocide’ as a crime”. While Bulgarian Parliament rejected a motion envisaging recognition of the so-called Armenian genocide, President Bush’s April 24 message again refrained this year using the word ‘genocide’.

### **1. Argentina**

During the period we are examining the Argentinean Senate turned out to be the only parliament to declare support for the Armenian genocide allegations. On 19 April 2006 the Argentinean Senate issued a statement in which it denounced the “genocide” perpetrated against the Armenians, expressed solidarity with the relatives of the victims of the “genocide” and regret over the systematic denial of the “genocide”, and urged the international organizations to review their activities to defend human rights and to prevent crimes against humanity.<sup>17</sup>

This made Argentina the country that has adopted more decisions on the Armenian genocide allegations than any other country in the world. The Argentinean Senate had passed its first resolution on this issue in 1993. That was followed by a ten-year lull but since 2003 it has regularly passed a decision regarding the Armenian “genocide” every year. Furthermore, in 2004 Argentina enacted a law envisaging that in schools, including the universities, students should be taught about the Armenian “genocide” and that April 24 should be marked as the Armenian “genocide” commemoration day.

It is not easy to explain why the Argentinean Senate is displaying so much interest in this issue. Even in countries with a sizable Armenian minority (such as the Russian Federation, France and Lebanon) the number of resolutions adopted on the Armenian allegations is less than half the number of similar decisions taken in Argentina.

### **2. Canada**

In March 2004 Stephen Harper was elected chairman of Canada’s newly established Conservative Party. After the general elections he became Canada’s prime minister on 6 February 2006. About two months later he triggered a crisis between Turkey and Canada by making controversial remarks.

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<sup>17</sup> Azg, 23 April 2006



After striving for years the nearly 70,000-strong Armenian Diaspora in Canada had managed to elicit decisions supporting the Armenian genocide allegations – from the Canadian Senate in 2002 and from the Canadian House of Commons in 2004. However, out of consideration for the country's relations with Turkey, a succession of Canadian governments had decided that these decisions were not binding on the Canadian government. Canadian Armenians had tried (and failed) to persuade the government to recognize these decisions.

However, Stephen Harper, about two months after this nomination, said on 20 April 2006 in reply to a journalist's question on the genocide allegations, "*That was a vote held in the last Parliament. As you recall, Parliament passed that resolution recognizing the Armenian Genocide. Our party supported that resolution and we continue to recognize that parliamentary resolution.*"<sup>18</sup>

Furthermore, the prime minister sent a message to the Armenian National Committee of Canada, which is a Tashnak affiliated organization, to mark the "anniversary" of the "Medz Yeghern which means the Big Disaster in the Armenian language and is the term Armenians employ to mean genocide. He said, "I would like to extend my sincere greetings to all of those marking the sombre anniversary of the Medz Yeghern. Ninety-one years ago the Armenian people experienced terrible suffering and loss of life. In recent years the Senate of Canada adopted a motion acknowledging this period as 'the first genocide of the Twentieth Century' while the House of Commons adopted a motion that 'acknowledges the Armenian genocide of 1915 and condemns this act as a crime against humanity'. My party and I supported those resolutions, and continue to recognize them today. We must never forget the lessons of history, nor should we allow the enmities of history to divide us. The freedom, democracy, and human rights enjoyed by all Canadians are rooted in our mutual respect for one another."<sup>19</sup>

Chairman of the Armenian National Committee of Canada Vagarch Eghramjian said that "truth and justice will prevail over short term economic gains or political expediency. The Prime Minister's statement is a clear message to the despots of the world that Canada and the free world will not tolerate genocide and ethnic cleansing."<sup>20</sup>

Canada's House of Commons marked April 24 as the Armenian "genocide"

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18 PanArmenian, 20 April 2006

19 Armenian National Committee of Canada, Press Release, 21 April 2006

20 Ibid

commemoration day, with House members from various parties making speeches in support of the Armenian allegations. Foreign Minister Peter MacKay too made a speech in which he reiterated the views the prime minister expressed in his April 24 message to the Armenians and “then the Speaker of the House invited the members of the House to observe a minute of silence in memory of the victims of the Armenian Genocide”.<sup>21</sup>

The Turkish Foreign Ministry issued a statement on 25 April 2006 in reaction to the Canadian Prime Minister’s remarks. The ministry expressed regret over those remarks, pointing out that although the Armenian genocide allegations have been proven to be groundless Prime Minister Harper had presented them as if they reflected historical facts. That is a gravely prejudiced attitude and such remarks would not contribute to the climate of dialogue between Turkey and Armenia while adversely affecting the Turkey-Canada relations, it stressed. The ministry went on to recall that in the past Armenian terrorists had killed and wounded Turkish diplomats in Canada. Unilateral distortion of the tragic incidents of the past for the sake of political gains would not serve the purpose of creating a common future for mankind on the basis of peace and cooperation, it said. With that statement the ministry reiterated Turkey’s proposal for creation of a joint commission consisting of Turkish, Armenian and other historians that would examine the historical facts pertaining to the 1915 incidents on the basis of archival material.<sup>22</sup>

That statement made no reference to potential measures Turkey could adopt against Canada while a newspaper said that a decision was taken to ban the Canadian companies from making bids for the construction of a nuclear reactor (in Sinop) due to the aforementioned stance of the Canadian government.<sup>23</sup>

The Armenian issue drew attention for some time from the Canadian press when Turkish Ambassador in Ottawa Aydemir Erman was recalled to Ankara briefly for consultations and when Turkey withdrew from the Mapple Flag air force exercises taking place in Canada.

21 Armenian National Committee of Canada, Press Release, April 24, 2006. During the speeches made at the House, Karygiannis, a House member of Greek origin, referred to the region where Turkey is situated as “that part of the world” and to the so-called “Pontus genocide”. He posed Foreign Minister MacKay the following question: “Today there continues to be human rights violations against the Kurds and the Cypriots in that part of the world. When will the Prime Minister have the strength of his convictions and have his foreign minister officially recognize the Armenian and Pontian genocides committed by the Ottoman Empire?” The minister did not give a reply.

22 www.mfa.gov.tr Açıklamalar, 2006 No. 63, 25 April 2006

23 Hürriyet, 25 April 2006

The Canadian government can hardly be said to have benefited either on the domestic political scene or internationally from recognition of the genocide allegations.

Regarding the domestic political scene one could say that the Canadian Armenians would now be more likely to vote for the Conservative Party in the next election. However, the next election is over three years away. Meanwhile, no one should expect the Canadian Turks to vote for the Conservative Party in the next election. So, there will be votes gained and votes lost.

Regarding international politics, it would only be normal that Canada's relations with Turkey would regress. If the effects of that regression would be felt in the economic field as well, that could entail serious losses for Canada.

As a gesture of conciliation, the Canadian Foreign Minister has praised Prime Minister Erdoğan's proposal for creation of a joint commission of historians with Armenia, saying that he would urge the Armenian authorities to accept this proposal.<sup>24</sup> However, since, together with the both houses of the Canadian Parliament, the Canadian government has already acknowledged the Armenian genocide allegations, it does not seem logical that they would now support the creation of a commission of historians that would investigate whether the 1915 incidents had been a genocide.

### 3. France

In 2001 a law was passed in France in recognition of the Armenian genocide allegations. Not content with that law, the French Armenians had demanded that those rejecting their genocide allegations should be punished. Some French deputies had drafted a number of motions to this effect but these had not been included in the National Assembly's agenda since these were merely individual attempts. Meanwhile, a group of renowned French historians had called for abolishment of those French laws (the 2001 law, for example) that deliver judgment on historical events. That too had rendered more difficult enactment of a law criminalizing the "negation" of the "genocide". However, despite these developments, the French Socialist Party did table a motion to this effect.

The French Socialists acts in this manner mainly because of the difficult situ-

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24 Anatolia News Agency, 9 June 2006

ation the country's ruling party is in. The French government has not performed successfully enough either economically or in the realm of social services. President Chirac has lost prestige to a significant extent. The UMP, the ruling party, is suffering from a certain turmoil, or, to put it differently, instability, caused by these failures. The Socialists want to make use of this situation to wear out the government if not to bring it down. The motion in question is as much a blow to the government as it is an attempt to give satisfaction to the Armenians. The Socialists have obviously calculated that during parliamentary debates the government would, whether it wanted to or not, reject the motion out of consideration for France's relations with Turkey; and that this would wear out the government since the French public opinion is not sympathetic towards Turkey.

The French Socialist Party presented on 27 April 2006 the following motion that was to be incorporated into the 2001 law that acknowledges the Armenian genocide allegations: "Article 2: Those who negate the occurrence of the Armenian genocide of 1915 by using any of the methods cited in the Article 23 of the Freedom of Press Law dated 29 July 1881, will be punished according to "Article 24 bis" of the same law." In other words, those publicly denying that the Armenian "genocide" had happened (by, for example, publishing an article or making a speech) would face a prison sentence of up to five years and a fine of up to 45,000 Euro.

In a statement he issued on this subject Chairman of the French Socialist Party François Hollande stressed that lately there has been an increase in activities aimed at negating the "Armenian genocide" and that, for that reason, negators of the "Armenian genocide" should be punished.<sup>25</sup> The activities he was referring to was the march some 3,000 Turks had staged on 18 March 2006 to protest erection of an Armenian "genocide" monument in Lyon.<sup>26</sup> On 18 April graffiti written in Turkish appeared on the monument. Considering the fact that almost every day hundreds of marches are staged in France where there is an abundance of graffiti, there is hardly anything extraordinary about Turks staging a protest march or about a few words being scribbled on the monument.

The motion in question drew strong reactions from the Turkish public opinion. As if the accusation that Armenians had been subjected to a genocide was not grave enough, now an attempt was being made to ensure that those who say, "The Armenian genocide never happened," would be given prison sentences and

25 Le Monde, 29 April 2006

26 Agence France Presse, 18 March 2006

ordered to pay heavy fines. The Turkish public opinion found that totally unacceptable. These reactions included calls for extreme measures that would hardly benefit anybody: There were calls for a boycott of French goods and the suggestion that a monument should be erected in Ankara on the street where the French Embassy is situated. Curiously, no one in Turkey spoke up to support the French motion even indirectly.

In fact, to the surprise of everybody, certain Turkish intellectuals who had embraced the Armenian genocide allegations actually criticized the French move. It was thought that it would have been more logical for them to support the motion just as the Diaspora Armenians --whose views they share-- have done.

Nine Turkish academics that had organized or participated in the conference held at the Bilgi University in September 2005 (where only the Armenian views were defended and expression of the counter-views was not permitted) issued a statement in which they said that they shared the pain of the Armenians. Then they proceeded to point out that the French motion would harm the “process of questioning the history and the common memory” and that it would prevent free discussions in France, making a similar and all the more powerful impact on Turkey.<sup>27</sup> In an interview he gave to *Le Monde*, Halil Berktaş, one of the persons that signed the statement, said that if the motion were to be passed the Turkish Parliament could retaliate by passing a bill criminalizing recognition of the “genocide”.<sup>28</sup>

Regardless of what its real purpose was, that statement had a positive aspect in that it showed that everybody in Turkey, including those who believed that a “genocide” had taken place, were united against the French motion.

Not only the Turks and the French but “third party” academics too became involved in the public discussions on the French motion.<sup>29</sup>

Guenther Lewy, the author of the book, “Armenian Massacres in Ottoman Turkey: A Disputed Genocide”, said, “Parliaments should discuss the laws and not history...I oppose the existence of such laws wherever they are...such laws could have functioned in Germany after the World War II, but they are not needed anymore.”

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27 Radikal, 10 May 2006. The text of the statement, translated into French, appeared in daily *La Libération* on the same day.

28 *Le Monde*, 18 May 2006

29 *Zaman*, 10 May 2006

Andrew Mango, the author of the book, "Atatürk", said, "*Such a law is unlikely to be exercised in my country, Britain. Britain even allows you to deny the Jewish Holocaust because we highly appreciate the speech freedom.*"

Let us come to renowned Dutch historian Prof. Eric Zürcher considered the French bill objectionable in two aspects: Primarily politicians should avoid writing history; and the use of the word 'genocide' is a hindrance to any research being conducted on the events in 1915. He said that the recognition of the Armenian genocide allegations cannot be made a condition for Turkey's entry to the European Union. 'What France did in Algeria, Belgium in Congo and the Netherlands as well in the Far-East, have never been discussed by the EU; so then why Turkey?'"

Ara Sarafian, a British historian of Armenian origin, too pointed out that enactment of the bill would disrupt Turkey-EU relations and cause nationalism to rise in Turkey. The debates in Turkey on the Armenian question could come to an end because of it, he said. He recalled that there were the Algeria and Ruanda cases in France's past. So, he said, France should face up to its own past.<sup>30</sup>

Israeli historian and diplomat Elie Brnavi too opposed the bill, saying that efforts to dictate historical facts by enacting laws would be unacceptable. He pointed out that if the bill were to be passed the Armenians would rejoice whereas Turkey-France relations would receive a blow and those circles in France that oppose Turkey's EU membership would use that law.<sup>31</sup>

Turkish authorities had a strong adverse reaction to the motion.

Press reports said that, sending a letter to President Chirac, the Turkish President of the Republic stressed that dealing with issues related to history was a task for historians and not for politicians. The bill in question would go against the freedom of thought and expression cherished by France as well, he said. He pointed out that disruption of the friendship between the two countries due to this situation –which that was not compatible with the historical facts-- would be contrary to the interests of the two countries.<sup>32</sup>

30 Zaman, 10 May 2006

31 Cumhuriyet, 17 May 2006

32 Hürriyet, 11 May 2006

TBMM Speaker Bülent Arınç wrote a letter to Jean-Louis Debré, the speaker of the French National Assembly, to underline the role France had played in the application of the fundamental human rights and to point out that the bill in question would go against the freedom of expression.<sup>33</sup>

Having invited the representatives of the major French companies doing business in Turkey, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan told them on 9 May 2006 that the bill in question was delivering a blow to the freedom of thought and expression and asked them to strive to prevent its enactment. Otherwise relations between the two countries would be disrupted, he said. The prime minister went on to say that in Turkey the archives were open but that Turkey's positive approach was not eliciting a similar response from Armenia. The visiting businessmen promised to do all they could.<sup>34</sup> Indeed, it was announced that the chairman of the Turkish-French Chamber of Trade sent a letter to President Chirac for this purpose.<sup>35</sup>

Furthermore, the prime minister met with President Chirac in Vienna in the course of the EU-Latin America summit and expressed the uneasiness the bill had caused in Turkey.<sup>36</sup> It has been claimed that Chirac told him that France would display the sensitivity required in the face of Turkey's concern, that he even spoke about the possibility that this issue would not even be put on the agenda during the French National Assembly's May 18 session.<sup>37</sup>

When he met his French counterpart Philippe Douste-Blazy during the NATO meeting in Sofia Foreign Minister Abdullah Gül made his reaction known by asking him, "How can there be freedom of thought like this? If the president, the prime minister, were to come and expressed their views would you arrest them?" Douste-Blazy merely said that the bill did not reflect his government's stance.<sup>38</sup> Later, in a statement he made in İzmir, Gül said that everybody should act with a sense of responsibility on this issue. It would be wrong to plunge the Turkey-France relations into jeopardy with petty domestic political considerations, he added.<sup>39</sup>

Turkish authorities summoned the Turkish Ambassador to France Osman Korum to Ankara for consultations "for a brief period".

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33 New Anatolian, 2 May 2006

34 Milliyet, 10 May 2006

35 Le Monde, 10 May 2006

36 Hürriyet, 12 May 2006

37 Hürriyet, 13 May 2006

38 Milliyet, 3 May 2006

39 New Anatolian, 12 May 2006

On 9 May a four-member TBMM delegation that included Mehmet Dülger, chairman of the TBMM Foreign Affairs Committee, went to France and discussed the bill in question with high-ranking officials including Speaker of the National Assembly Debré. Dülger referred to the possibility of French goods being boycotted and French companies not being invited to bid for official projects in Turkey. His words received a lot of press interest in France.<sup>40</sup>

Turks living in France and the Turkish associations had not done much to prevent the enactment of the 2001 law with which France acknowledged the Armenian “genocide”. Five years later, some of these associations are now more active, seriously trying to prevent the new bill. They have staged campaigns to gather signatures, petitioning against the bill. Their officials have met with the leading members of the Socialist Party. They have staged demonstrations around the premises of the French National Assembly.

Turkish unions have published paid advertisements titled “Appel a Nos Amis Français” (Appeal to Our French Friends) in a number of French newspapers such as *Le Monde* and *Le Figaro* to underline the hazards of the new law proposed by the Socialists. They have called for a withdrawal of the bill.<sup>41</sup>

In Turkey various groups demonstrated against the bill. Followers of the Workers’ Party (İP) staged a demonstration in front of the French General Consulate in İstanbul.<sup>42</sup> In Ankara similar demonstrations were staged by the İP, the Republican People’s Party (CHP), the Turkish Labor Confederation (Türk-İş), and the Kemalist Thought Association in front of the French Embassy.<sup>43</sup>

A number of Turkish journalists and members of Parliament announced that if the controversial bill became law they would go to France where they would publicly state that the Armenian “genocide” had not happened. They said that if the French courts convicted them they would apply to the European Court of Human Rights, have these verdicts reversed, and then seek compensation. As the official reactions in France, Foreign Ministry Spokesman Denis Simonneau merely said, “*We are very attentive to the Turkish authorities’ reactions on this issue.*”

40 *Le Monde*, 10 May 2006

41 *Hürriyet*, *Le Monde*, 6 May 2006

42 *Armenews*, 12 May 2006

43 *Hürriyet*, 16 May 2006



Armenian Foreign Ministry Deputy Spokesman Vladimir Karapetyan expressed his country's appreciation of the bill which envisages punishments for those negating the Armenian "genocide".<sup>44</sup>

In this context the Turkish press made frequent references to the close economic ties that exist between Turkey and France, noting that the annual trade volume stood around 10 billion Euro, with French exports to Turkey amounting to 6.3 billion Euro and Turkish exports to France to 3.7 billion Euro. It was pointed out that the two countries have formed especially close ties in the automotive industry.<sup>45</sup> Meanwhile, there were also calls for a boycott of French goods if the bill were to be passed.<sup>46</sup>

Members of the French National Assembly had a mixed reaction to the bill in question. While some dignitaries such as National Assembly Speaker Debré<sup>47</sup>, Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee Hervé de la Charette<sup>48</sup> and Socialist Party Parliamentary Group Chairman Jean-Marc Ayrault<sup>49</sup> took a stance against the bill, few Socialist Party figures (other than Socialist Party Chairman Hollande and his immediate circle) actually spoke up in favor of it.

The ruling party, UMP, on the other hand, refrained from determining a specific party line on this issue, leaving its members free to vote as they want.

Announcing his stance on this issue a few days before the parliamentary debates, President Chirac said that he had noted with emphasis on various occasions the need for Turkey to engage in some "memory exercise" in the framework of "adoption of European values". He said that the Armenian question was a sensitive issue that required cool-headed thinking with a sense of responsibility.<sup>50</sup> The fact that the president did not make any reference at all to the bill triggered the speculation that he was against it.

The bill presented by the Socialist Party to criminalize negation of the Armenian "genocide" was debated at the French National Assembly by employing "niche parlementaire", a procedure that ensures speedy debates. When the

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44 PanArmenian.net 11 May 2006

45 Hürriyet, 13 May 2006

46 Sabah, 9 May 2006, Türkiye, 13 May 2006

47 Zaman, 11 May 2006

48 Hürriyet, 11 May 2006

49 PanArmenian, 12 May 2006

50 La Libération; Armenews, 18 May 2006

debates reached time limit, Assembly Speaker Debré intervened, bringing the session to an end by saying that the bill was being suspended until a future date to be determined later. Thus the bill could not be put to a vote. It seems that the soonest it can be put on the agenda once again is in fall 2006.

The rapporteur and five of the six members of Parliament who took the floor during the debates, spoke in favor of the bill. The sixth one (Marc Laffineur) opposed the bill on the grounds that history should not be written by passing laws.

It is not possible for us to give here all of the views expressed about the bill in question. We will only give a summary of the speeches we consider to be more significant than the others, that is, the speeches made by the rapporteur and the foreign minister. We will also provide some explanatory information about certain issues referred to in these speeches.<sup>51</sup>

The rapporteur, Christophe Masse, began by saying that the bill was drafted after the “negating” demonstrations triggered by the inauguration of the Armenian monument in Lyon on 24 April 2006. He said that the law passed in 2001 had drawn the line on the quarrels regarding “history and memory” on the Armenian issue. What he meant was that since the 2001 law recognized the Armenian “genocide” nothing could be done on this issue anymore. He said that the absence of an international court decision on the Armenian “genocide” would not prevent restriction of the freedom of expression. He said that a century ago neither the notion of international justice nor the notion of genocide had existed anyway. Then he claimed that in our day Armenia is unable to bring this issue before the International Court of Justice because that would require Turkey’s consent. And, finally, in an effort to justify the restrictions envisaged by the bill in question, he argued that the Human Rights Convention had introduced certain restrictions on the freedom of expression.

First let us discuss the rapporteur’s argument that since a law was enacted in 2001 there is nothing left to do. If laws do not fit the facts they get changed. In fact, the 2001 law is one of those that the group of French historians have listed as laws that should be abolished because these deliver judgment about historical events.

51 The information we give on these speeches are from the official records of the French National Assembly which were published on the Les Nouvelles d’Armenie en Ligne website ([www.armenews.com](http://www.armenews.com)) on 18 May 2006.

Coming to the rapporteur's argument about that the "absence" of any decision by an international court on the Armenian "genocide", it must be noted that in 1919 the Ottoman Empire demanded creation of a commission consisting of the representatives of neutral countries to look into the Armenian allegations. If that commission had been formed and if it had accused some persons of committing acts of violence against the Armenians obviously a court would have been set up to try those persons. The British obstructed the creation of an investigation commission consisting of the representatives of neutral countries. Furthermore, the British attempted to try the Ottoman officials themselves but the British prosecutor could not find sufficient evidence. In short, it is not a valid excuse to say that no international court had been in existence a century ago. If there had been a will to this effect such a court could easily have been set up.

Let us come to the allegation that in our day Armenia is not applying to the International Court of Justice because Turkey would not give its approval for such a move. The rapporteur is obviously not adequately informed on this issue. Article 9 of the 1948 UN Convention for the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide says, "Disputes between the Contracting Parties relating to the interpretation, application or fulfillment of the present Convention, including those relating to the responsibility of a State for genocide or any of the other acts enumerated in Article 3, shall be submitted to the International Court of Justice at the request of any of the parties to the dispute."

According to this article, Armenia can apply to the International Court of Justice without Turkey's consent. It can say that Turkey is responsible "for acts of genocide or for any of the acts cited in Article 3". The rapporteur fails to mention one point: Since the relocation of the Armenians took place in 1915, that is, before the Genocide Convention was signed, there is no way the Convention can be applied to these incidents. Therefore, the Court would not comply with Armenia's demand. Only if Turkey voluntarily told the Court it was accepting the retroactive application of the Convention to the 1915 incidents that the Court might agree to consider that case -- but it would have no obligation to do so. This is the legal situation. Meanwhile, in reality, Armenia has refrained from making any announcement that would indicate that it would or might take this issue to the International Court of Justice. There is a widely held conviction to the effect that Armenia is carefully avoiding taking legal initiatives.

The first issue Foreign Minister Douste-Blazy dwelt on was that the National Assembly laws that deliver judgment on historical events. He pointed out that

recently a consensus had been reached to this effect at the Assembly (when reference to the “positive role” played by France in the colonies was removed from the text of a bill).

Douste-Blazy went on to say that Armenian and Turkish historians could create a common memory, and that would be the best guarantee of a normal relationship to be sustained between the two sides. (When he talked about a “common memory” the French minister obviously meant “Armenian and Turkish historians interpreting the facts in the same manner”.) The minister said that work to this effect had already begun in Armenia and in Turkey and that this should be welcomed and supported. The bill could harm these efforts, he warned. Endorsing the bill could have negative consequences not only for a potential reconciliation between the Turks and the Armenians but also for French interests, he noted. Saying that there are dark pages in the history of every nation, he stressed that, therefore, one had to face up to one’s past and engage in a “memory exercise”. He pointed out that this is not an easy task at all. Then he said that though Turkey should acknowledge the painful periods of its past, today’s Turkey was not responsible for the incidents of the final days of the Ottoman Empire.

Douste-Blazy went on to point out that in Turkey examination of the archives has been facilitated, that a conference bringing together historians and intellectuals with a variety of views was held in Turkey last September to pave the way for an objective examination of the terrible incidents of 1915-1916, that it is believed that the conference, supported by Ankara, constituted a turning point on the Turkish people’s recognition of that tragic period in their history, that, in the meanwhile, there emerged in Turkey new dynamics towards establishment of a dialogue with Armenia, that in order to facilitate resolution of the disputes it would be useful to encourage contacts between the two countries, that the Turkish authorities suggested last year a joint study of history with Armenia, and that France supports such efforts.

Douste-Blazy noted that France was a friend of both Armenia and Turkey, and that France has had a strong, close and consistent relationship with Turkey for a very long time, having formed bonds with Turkey in the fields of economy, culture and science over the years. He stressed that France shared the same views with Turkey in the realm of international relations. Turkey’s efforts for modernization and for a dialogue should be supported and France should not encourage Turkey to become inward looking and to develop an authoritarian nationalism, he stressed.

The French foreign minister said that enactment of the draft would be perceived as an unfriendly gesture by the majority of the Turkish people and would weaken French influence in Turkey and in the entire region. Also, he pointed out that Turkey, who achieved 7 percent growth in 2005, is a partner of primary importance for France. He noted that a great number French companies operate in Turkey and that there is a cultural, scientific and artistic affinity at stake. He urged the deputies to act with a sense of responsibility and reject the motion.

To sum up, the French foreign minister reminded the deputies that parliaments should not pass laws on historical issues and asked them to reject the bill on the grounds that passing the draft would harm the “questioning of the history” process which he claimed was underway in Turkey and, also, because that would be perceived as an unfriendly act in Turkey and French economic interests would be harmed.

We are not going to focus on certain erroneous assessments Douste-Blazy made in his speech. We think that the commendable aspect of this speech is that the minister has openly and correctly said that if the bill were to be passed that would be perceived as an unfriendly act by Turkey and that he implied that this would harm French interests. The suspension of the bill for some time has prevented a major crisis in Turkey-France relations at least temporarily.

What will happen when the bill re-appears on the agenda in fall? That would depend mainly on the extent of the clout the French government would be wielding in the French National Assembly at that time. It seems that the lower house would definitely uphold the bill if the French government continued to be in a weak position as it is now. However, the bill would have to clear the Senate as well to become law. And it seems that this would not be easy at all. If the Senate made even the slightest change in the text the draft would have to be debated anew at the lower house. In that case, it may be sent back and forth between the lower house and the upper house (as was the case during the 1998-2001 period) and, in the course of that shuttling process, it may be enacted at an unexpected moment. It is understood that in such a case Turkey would take certain restrictive measures involving general relations in an attempt to have the law altered. However, it would be out of the question for France to alter a law shortly after it was passed. Most probably France would try to respond to Turkey's restrictive measures within the context of the EU, slowing down or halting the Turkish accession to the union. Thus, there would be an escalation in the negative developments in the Turkey-France relations.

Since it would punish the expression of views that go against the Armenian genocide allegations, the French bill basically aims for a breach of the freedom of expression. Yet, freedom of expression is one of the fundamental principles of the European Declaration of Human Rights. Article 10 of the Convention says that everybody has the right to express his views and that this entails the freedom of conscience and the right to receive and to provide information or ideas. Saying that the Armenian “genocide” never happened is an act that is in the realm of the freedom of conscience.

The same article determines the situations where the freedom of expression can be restricted. In brief, these entail national security, preservation of the territorial integrity and public security, continuation of the public order, crime prevention, and some personal rights and issues. The Armenian genocide allegations do not fall into any of these categories of restriction.

Article 33 of the European Declaration on Human Rights says that any party to the Convention can apply to the Human Rights Court against another country that is also a party to the Convention – due to any alleged breach of the provisions of the Convention.

Accordingly, if the bill gets enacted Turkey will be able to apply to the Human Rights Court. Furthermore, people to be sentenced to jail or ordered to pay fines under that law would be able to sue France under Article 34 of the Convention.

From the political aspect the important point is that if Turkey opened such a case Turkey would not have to take measures in the realm of bilateral relations while France would have to maintain normal relations with Turkey since the issue would then be before the judiciary.

Let us stress that Turkey would stand a strong chance of winning this case if it prepared properly for it.

#### **4. Belgium**

In Belgium a law passed in 1995 envisions prison sentences from eight days to one year range as well as fines of up to 5,000 Euro for those that deny the Holocaust or play down its significance or try to justify it. In the past the Armenian circles in Belgium had tried hard (but failed) to bring the alleged Armenian genocide as well under the scope of the law in question.

More recently, the drafting of a bill to this effect in France, has caused this issue to be revived in Belgium. Walloon Liberal Party Senator François Roelands du Vivier (who always protects Armenian interest) and Ms. Christine Defraigne have presented a bill to this effect to the Belgian Senate.

The bill puts three “genocides” under the scope of the law passed in 1995: The “genocide perpetrated by the Ottoman Young Turks regime during the World War I”, the genocide perpetrated by the German National Socialist regime during the World War II and the genocide perpetrated by the Hutu regime in Rwanda in 1994. It stipulates that “other genocides or crimes against humanity” would have to be acknowledged by an international court for them to be placed under the scope of this law. Furthermore, it introduces the principle that the “negation of the genocide” must have been perpetrated for the purpose of discrimination or incitement to hate, or with the purpose of debasing a person or persons because of his or their nationality, race, ethnic roots or religion. The sentences the motion envisions are the same as in the penal law: prison sentences in the eight days to one year range and fines of up to 5,000 Euro.<sup>52</sup>

The efforts made in the past to expand the scope of the 1995 law to cover the Armenian genocide allegations as well, had met with difficulties because, for these allegations to be recognized, it was deemed necessary to have a court decision to this effect. And no such court decision existed. The latest bill seeks to overcome this difficulty by naming directly and at the same time providing a definition of the Armenian “genocide” -- by referring to “the genocide perpetrated by the Ottoman Young Turks regime during the World War I”.

Another significant aspect of the bill is that it specifies the “genociders” but not the “victims”. Indeed, the words “Armenian”, “Jewish” and “Tutsi” are conspicuously absent from the draft. This is probably to allow for future claims about “genocides” having been committed against some other groups as well. This way they would be able to claim in the future that the Armenians were not the only group subjected to a “genocide” by the Ottomans, that the Assyrians, Caldeans and Pontians too had been subjected to genocide by the Ottomans. And, in the case of the Germans, it would be possible to claim that the gypsies too had been subjected to a genocide.

✧ Judging by past experience it can be said that the bill is not very likely to be

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52 Armenews, 15 May 2006

passed. However, if the similar bill presented to the French National Assembly became law that would boost the Belgian bill's chances.

## 5. Netherlands

The Christian Union (ChristenUnie) Party which has three seats in the 150-seat Dutch Parliament, presented to Parliament on 1 June 2006 a bill that envisages up to one-year prison sentences for persons deliberately denying a genocide or a crime against humanity with the purpose of delivering an insult or in order to incite hatred. Ms. Tineke Huizinga, who presented the motion with a speech, listed the Armenian "genocide" among the crimes that would come under the scope of the motion.<sup>53</sup>

Fadime Örgü, a Dutch parliamentarian of Turkish origin, said that the bill would be blocked during the stage of parliamentary committee debates. Even if it cleared the committees its adoption by the parliament floor would still be difficult, she pointed out. She said that as the Dutch Turks they would never permit the draft to become law.<sup>54</sup> Meanwhile, there are reports indicating that members of the Dutch Parliament have recently been bombarded by e-mails forwarded especially by the Turks who oppose the Christian Union bill.<sup>55</sup>

The Dutch Parliament had passed on 21 December 2004 a resolution in which it demanded that during the talks to be held with Turkey towards EU membership the "Armenian genocide issue" should be clearly and consistently brought up. Thus it had acknowledged the Armenian genocide allegations. Now what is at stake is punishment of the "negators" of "genocide". The Christian Union move has obviously been inspired by the bill presented to the French National Assembly.

Under normal conditions a bill restricting the freedom of expression such as this one should not get much support in the Netherlands. However, the Armenians' ability to arouse feelings of pity must not be underestimated. Also, if the French bill gets enacted that will definitely clear the path of the Dutch bill.

53 Anp (Dutch Press Agency), 1 June 2006

54 Zaman, 4 June 2006

55 Anp (Dutch Press Agency), 1 June 2006



## 6. Bulgaria

Together with 12 deputies of his party, Bulgaria's ATAKA Party Chairman Volen Siderov has presented to Parliament a draft resolution that would acknowledge the Armenian "genocide" and make April 24 the commemoration of the genocide victims day on the grounds that the Armenian "genocide" had great significance for Bulgaria since the Ottoman Empire had "committed genocide against the Bulgarians too." The draft says that Bulgaria has been tardy in acknowledging "this genocide".

ATAKA is a party of the extreme right that has carried into today's Bulgaria the racist ideologies that had been valid in Central Europe in the 1930s, managing to get enough voter support to win parliamentary seats. As can be expected it has taken a stance against all communities in Bulgaria that are not ethnic Bulgarians, especially against the Turks. It is only normal that this party joins hand with the militant Armenians and, in this context, with the Tashnaks, since it shares the same views with them in the realm of racial hatred.

The Rights and Freedoms Movement, a member of the ruling coalition whose members are mostly Turks, opposed the ATAKA move and the draft was defeated with 81 votes while 55 deputies voted in favor of the draft and 33 deputies abstained.<sup>56</sup>

A considerable section of the Bulgarian people suffer from a deep-rooted anti-Turkism. Bulgaria was granted independence in practice in 1878 due to Russia's strategic calculations rather than Bulgarian people's efforts. After the independence, the Bulgarians had to be turned into a nation. For that purpose, two factors were used. Firstly, the idea that "a much bigger Bulgarian state had existed in the past and modern Bulgaria should regain the boundaries of that old state" was propagated. Secondly, it was argued that under Ottoman rule the Bulgarians were kept in an undeveloped state, that they were subjected to atrocities and that their population diminished. In order to fulfill its Greater Bulgaria dreams, Bulgaria took part in the Balkan Wars and in the two world wars. It met with defeat on all these occasions. Thus the Greater Bulgaria dream came to an end but the anti-Ottomanism survived, turning into hostility towards the Turkish minority in Bulgaria.

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<sup>56</sup> Zaman, 10 May 2006

The Turkish minority was subjected to discrimination and pressure and this constituted the main problem between the Turkish Republic and Bulgaria. Meanwhile, due to the pressure exerted on them, many Turks had to migrate to Turkey. During the 1950-1951 and the 1968-1978 periods Turks migrated to Turkey in great numbers. To bolster his own position (with the conviction that Turkey would not be able to intervene) President Zhivkov launched in late 1984 a policy of forceful assimilation of the Turks remaining in the country. In this framework the Turks were forced to adopt Bulgarian names. They were banned from speaking Turkish, listening to Turkish music and wearing traditional Turkish clothes. The few programs aired in Turkish language by the regional TV and radio channels were scrapped altogether. A newspaper and a magazine published in Turkish in part were closed down. Turkey referred to Bulgaria's stance at all international organizations. Furthermore, it reduced its bilateral relations with Bulgaria to a bare minimum. Turkey's efforts pushed the Zhivkov Administration into a difficult position and, as a result, they opened up Bulgaria's border with Turkey in May 1989 and permitted the Turks (who were resisting the Bulgarian attempts to assimilate them) to migrate to Turkey. The confusion created by the migration of three hundred thousand of Turks weakened Zhivkov administration which failed at the same time to maintain good relations with the Soviets. Protests staged by the human rights defenders and the environmentalists in the country, caused Zhivkov to be toppled in November 1989.

The Communist government that succeeded the Zhivkov Administration discontinued the measures aimed at forceful assimilation of the Turkish minority. Turks became quickly organized, founding a political party that opened its doors to the ethnic Bulgarians as well. This party, which calls itself the Rights and Freedoms Movement, has used its around 10 percent vote wisely, taking part in the government from time to time as is the case currently.

The draft resolution acknowledging the Armenian "genocide" may be put forth anew after some time. This is because there is the possibility that the number of deputies supporting the draft—currently 55—will go up. Some of the 33 deputies who abstained may decide to support the draft in a future vote. Also, some of the 71 deputies that did not take part in the voting process may support the draft in a future vote. Bulgaria is expected to become an EU member by the end of 2007. If that happens Bulgaria may feel freer to act regarding Turkey. For this reason, in the future as well as now, the stance taken by the Rights and Freedoms Movement will be decisive. If the Rights and Freedoms Movements continues to categorically oppose such moves, drafts of this kind would not stand a chance

– as long as the current Bulgarian government remains in power. If, on the other hand, the Rights and Freedoms Movement acts in an hesitant manner or decides not to take part in a potential new government, that would boost the chances of the aforementioned draft.

## 7. United States of America

US president George W. Bush issued on 24 April 2006 his traditional message to mark the “Armenian Commemoration Day”.

This year too the president refrained from using the word “genocide” when referring to the relocation of the Armenians and this triggered criticism from the Armenians. The Armenian Assembly of America (AAA) which represents mostly affluent Armenians and prefers to have good relations with the administration, issued a statement in which it mildly criticized the president, pointing out that he failed to keep the promise he had made to “acknowledge” the Armenian “genocide” during the 2002 election campaign.<sup>57</sup> Meanwhile, recalling that over 200 members of Congress had urged the president to acknowledge the “genocide”, the Armenian National Committee of America (ANCA) which is a Tashnak Party organization, said, “The president ignored the counsel of the one hundred and seventy-eight Representatives and thirty Senators who had written letters urging him to properly characterize the Armenian genocide.” It said, “President Bush failed, once again, to honor his pledge to properly characterize the Armenian Genocide as a ‘genocide’ in his annual April 24 remarks...candidate W. Bush, campaigning for votes among Armenian voters in the Michigan Republican primary, pledged to properly characterize the genocidal campaign against the Armenian people...His Administration has consistently opposed legislation marking this crime against humanity.”<sup>58</sup>

Prompted by the Armenians, 31 US senators and 178 members of the US House of Representatives had sent a letter to President Bush, asking him to use the word “genocide” in his annual message. These included John Kerry who was President Bush’s rival in the last presidential election and Senator Hillary Clinton, the wife of Bush’s predecessor Bill Clinton.<sup>59</sup> Meanwhile, the president’s brother John Ellis Bush who is the governor of Florida issued a statement in which he said, “Ottoman Turks were responsible for a mass extermination of an estimated

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57 Armenian Assembly of America, Press Release, 24 April 2006

58 Armenian National Committee of America, Press Release, 24 April 2006

59 Ntv, 23 April 2006

one a half million Armenians...Armenians were victims of genocide.”<sup>60</sup>

The president's 2006 message is quite similar to last year's message.<sup>61</sup> As in last year's message the word “annihilation”, which is almost synonymous with the word “genocide”, has been avoided. The terms the US president used this year included “mass killings”, “horrible tragedy”, “a terrible chapter of history”, “tragedy for all humanity” and “forced exile”. Except for the last one it would be difficult to say that these terms fit the relocation of the Armenians.

As in previous years President Bush has claimed that one and a half million Armenians had been killed en masse or subjected to “forced exile”. This number, which he had cited in his previous messages too, is in line with the Armenian propaganda that one and a half million people had died during the relocation. The death toll cannot have been so high because the total number of Armenians living in the Ottoman Empire hardly amounted to one and a half million. However, one has to bear in mind the fact that the US president's message is of a political character rather than scholarly. Since this figure (one and a half million) satisfied the Armenians while practically no objections came from Turkish historians he obviously saw nothing wrong in citing that figure.

One part of the message is quite interesting. President Bush said in his message, “We praise the individuals in Armenia and Turkey who have sought to examine the historical events of this time with honesty and sensitivity.” That is not a reference to the hundreds of Turkish academics and writers who believe that the relocation of the Armenians was not a genocide and who have been trying to prove that point scientifically. The persons he is referring to are the some thirty people, mostly staff members of universities set up by foundations, who had come together at Bilgi University premises last September to voice their pro-Armenian views.

Another significant part of the message is the part in which President Bush refers, as in last year's message, to an analysis made by the International Center for Transitional Justice (ICTJ), saying, “The analysis by the International Center for Transitional Justice, while not the final word, has made a significant contribution toward deepening our understanding of these events.” To be able to understand these words we have to look back a little. The ICTJ is a private judicial establishment that is not known much even in America. The Turkish-Armenian Recon-

60 ARMENPAC – The Armenian-American Political Action Committee, 7 April 2006

61 Review of Armenian Studies, Number 7-8, pp. 38-40

ciliation Commission (TARC) which has been abolished by now, had asked the ICTJ whether the UN Genocide Convention would apply to the 1915 incidents. The ICTJ said in its report that the Convention could not be implemented retroactively, and, that, therefore, it would not be not possible to demand land or compensation from Turkey. However, the ICTJ went on to make further comments in the report to reply to another question that had not been posed to it. It “prophesized” that if the UN Convention could be implemented retroactively the 1915 incidents would have been deemed a genocide. In short, the ICTJ seemed to be developing a formula which can be described as, “Let Turkey acknowledge the ‘genocide’ and let Armenia, in turn, not demand any land or compensation from Turkey.”

The fact that the US president has referred to this hardly significant establishment in his reports in two years in a row indicates that the US State Department embraces this formula. The Armenian government who is not strong enough to obtain land or compensation from Turkey, might opt for such a solution if it could silence the Tashnaks, a coalition partner. However, such a formula cannot be valid from Turkey’s standpoint since it does not fit the historical realities; the Turkish public opinion is extremely sensitive to the genocide allegations; and, with no exception all Turkish governments have categorically rejected the genocide allegations.

Probably the most important part of the message is the part that says, “We encourage dialogues, including through joint commissions, that strive for a shared understanding of these tragic events and move Armenia and Turkey towards normalized relations.” In a letter he had sent to President Kocharian on 14 May 2005 Prime Minister Erdoğan had suggested creation of a commission consisting of the historians and other experts of the two countries “to shed light on a controversial period of history”. President Kocharian had suggested, in his reply, an inter-governmental commission that would discuss all of the existing problems between the two countries.<sup>62</sup> The Turkish initiative thus proved fruitless since it became obvious that the Armenian president was giving priority to issues such as reopening of the common border in an effort to push the historical issues into the background. Referring to this issue in his 2005 message President Bush had cited “Prime Minister Erdoğan’s new proposal for creation of a Turkish-Armenian joint commission”. In this year’s message too he referred to this issue, stressing that the USA supported dialogue between the two countries, via joint commissions or

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62 Review of Armenian Studies, Number 7-8, pp. 24-25

otherwise. However, this time he did not mention the fact that the proposal in question had come from the Turkish prime minister. This may have resulted from the unfavorable climate a Hamas leader's (Meshal) visit to Ankara last February has created in Washington.

In short, this year's message was not much different than last year's. Naturally, it is not easy to find new terms or issues about the genocide allegations and Turkey-Armenia relations every year. For Turkey the main thing is for the US Administration to strive to adopt on the genocide allegations the kind of stance that would not cause hard feelings in any quarter.

### **8. The Czech Republic**

On 4 April 2006 a conference was held on the Armenian "genocide" at the Czech Republic's parliament. The event was organized by the Armenian Club in Prague and Jaromir Stetina, a member of the Czech Senate from the Greens Party.

Those taking part in the conference were ardent champions of the Armenian genocide allegations, namely, Vahank Dadrian, Ms. Tesa Hoffman and Ms. Hilda Chobanian together with a journalist named Yelda Özcan who was presented as "a Turkish historian living in Germany who would present the Turkish view". Armenia's Deputy Foreign Minister Arman Kirakosian too was present.<sup>63</sup> Also taking part in the conference, former Prime Minister Jan Carnogursky of Slovakia recounted his experiences about the Slovak Parliament acknowledging the "genocide".

During the conference the well-known Armenian allegations were voiced. Meanwhile, Kirakosian made comments along the following lines: "Armenia is ready to negotiate and cooperate with Turkey without any preconditions; however, it would never give up its policy towards winning international recognition for the genocide." His words are interesting since they show that even if the relations between the two countries improved Armenia would continue to make genocide allegations.

Senator Stetina said that, following the example set by the Slovak Parliament, they would draft and present to the Czech Parliament a document envisaging

<sup>63</sup> Noyan Tapan, 6 April 2006

recognition of the “genocide”.<sup>64</sup>

The conference was held under the auspices of the Czech Republic’s former President Vaclav Havel.<sup>65</sup> Havel did not take part in the conference but, in a speech he made at a meeting of the Council of Europe education ministers shortly after the conference, he drew a lot of attention by “equating the mass killings of Armenians by Turks 90 years ago to the slaughter of Jews in World War II.”<sup>66</sup> The current President Vaclav Klaus of the Czech Republic, on the other hand, had said during an interview he gave during the last week of March that it was useless to put the events of the past on the international agenda once again, that he did not think Turkey’s recognizing the Armenian “genocide” would do anybody good, and that holding Turkey responsible for a historical event was meaningless.<sup>67</sup>

Since these differences of view between the two presidents exist among the Czech politicians too it is not possible to say what would happen when Jaromir Stetina presents to the Czech Parliament a bill envisaging recognition of the Armenian “genocide”.

## 9. Poland

We had stated in the past that the Polish National Assembly had unanimously adopted on 19 April 2005 a resolution acknowledging the Armenian “genocide”.<sup>68</sup>

That came as a great disappointment to the Turkish public opinion since the people in Turkey have great sympathy for the Polish people due to certain myths about history. The move showed that these feelings were not mutual.

This issue was raised during Polish Foreign Minister Stefan Meller’s visit to Ankara in April. At a press conference he held together with his Polish counterpart, Foreign Minister Gül expressed Turkey’s concern. He stressed that the issue should be taken up by historians and not by politicians. He recalled that Turkey had made a proposal to this effect but could not get a positive reply from Armenia.<sup>69</sup>

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64 Armenews, 7 April 2006

65 Noyan Tapan, 5 April 2006

66 RFE/RL, 25 April 2006; and Jewish Telegraphic AGENCY, 26 April 2006

67 [www.soykirimgercegi.com](http://www.soykirimgercegi.com) 13 April 2006

68 Review of Armenian Studies, Number 7-8, pp. 29-31

69 Dünya online, 14 April 2006

During his visit to Deputy Parliament Speaker Sadık Yakut, the Polish foreign minister said that the Polish Assembly has passed the resolution in question in line with the demands of the Armenians in the country. The resolution is not “binding”, is not anti-Turkey, and it does not reflect the views of the Polish government, he stressed. Meller also said that he had told FM Gül that that he was ready to undertake a goodwill mission in order to bring together Turkish and Armenian historians to work on this issue<sup>70</sup>. Also, in a statement he made to a journalist he said that he would suggest that to Yerevan during a visit to Armenia in June.

Meller left the foreign ministry in mid-May and was replaced by Ms. Anna Fortyga. It is not clear yet what kind of stance the new minister will take on this issue.

### III. ATTEMPTS TO VIOLATE FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION IN THE USA

During the period we are examining two attempts were made in the USA to violate the freedom of expression regarding the Armenian question. Firstly, after a documentary prepared by the PBS company on the “genocide” was aired the Armenians and their supporters launched a campaign to prevent panel discussion during which the counter-views too could be expressed. Secondly, attempts were made to prevent two Turkish retired ambassadors from giving lectures on the Armenian question. The two had traveled to the USA for this purpose.

#### 1. PBS Television’s “Armenian Genocide” Documentary and the Panel

As can be discerned from its name the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) is a TV station operating on a public service basis in the USA. In other words it is a non-profit organization but it is not official. It has contracts with 348 local TV stations and thus has viewers in large numbers in the USA.

Last year a documentary film titled “Armenian Genocide” was made by renowned director-producer Emmy winner Andrew Goldberg.<sup>71</sup> The roughly one-hour documentary is understood to contain all elements of the Armenian propaganda concerning the so-called genocide.

<sup>70</sup> Anadolu Ajansı, 13 April 2006

<sup>71</sup> Canada News Wire, 10 April 2006



Andrew Goldberg, has personally stated that, of the cost of the film (\$ 650,000), 90 percent was met by Armenian sources and the remaining 10 percent by the Jewish organizations in the USA.<sup>72</sup> Meanwhile, let us note that Andrew Goldberg had worked for the Armenians in the past as well, producing a documentary titled “Armenians: A History of Survival”.<sup>73</sup>

The PBS did not hesitate to buy the documentary. According to its spokesman, Lea Sloan, the PBS is an establishment that “acknowledges and accepts” that the “Armenian genocide” had happened.<sup>74</sup> However, obviously to offset the one-sided nature of the documentary, the PBS wanted the airing of the documentary to be followed by a 30-minute panel where the Turkish and Armenian views would be discussed.

Peter Balakian, a writer of Armenian origin who is understood to have served as an adviser for the documentary, sent a letter to the PBS on 28 November 2005, objecting to the plan to organize panel discussions.<sup>75</sup> According to Balakian such panels would be held in case of programs that are not “balanced” whereas the “Armenian Genocide” documentary reflected the views of the parties concerned in a balanced manner. Balakian also argued that the Armenian “genocide” was not “in dispute”, that there existed a consensus to this effect in the world. Thirdly, he claimed that it would be ethically wrong to give equal weight to the views of those “denying” the “genocide”. However, the PBS insisted that the panel should take place.

The panel was held on 6 February 2006 and it was filmed so as to be shown on 17 April following the “Armenian Genocide” documentary. Taner Akçam, Peter Balakian, Prof. Dr. Justin McCarthy and Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ömer Turan took part in the panel, with the last too expressing the counter view.

The Armenian circles in the USA launched a campaign to prevent the airing of the taped panel discussion. In this framework, they mobilized four US congressmen, the top four of those that have been protecting the Armenian interests in the US Congress.<sup>76</sup> These persons wrote to congressmen, asking them to send letters to PBS President Wayne Godwin to persuade him to drop the plan to air the

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72 Mirror on Line, 12 April 2006

73 <http://www.imdb.com/name/nm1279480/>

74 New York Times, 25 February 2006

75 California Courier Online, 9 February 2006

76 These persons were Adam B. Schiff, Frank Pallone, George Radanovich and Joe Knollenberg.

taped panel discussion. They even provided the suggested copy of such a letter. This text said, in brief, that despite the Turkish government's effort "to obscure and alter history", there was no serious academic dispute about the "Armenian genocide" and it asked Godwin "that you reconsider the decision to include genocide deniers on your panel."<sup>77</sup>

The letter was signed by 26 members of the House of Representatives not counting the original four members. Two senators (Boxer and Ensign) too sent Godwin similar letters<sup>78</sup>. Let us recall that the US House of Representatives consists of 550 members and that the US Senate has 100 members. Also to be considered is the fact that the Congressional Armenian Caucus has over 150 members.

Meanwhile, some US-based Armenian organizations urged the Armenians to send letters and e-mail messages to the PBS to ensure that the taped discussion would not be aired. The Turks in the USA too sent letters and e-mail messages to the PBS in great numbers.

The PBS made its stance known all too quickly. Jacoba Atlas, co-chief of the channel in charge of the programming services, said (in her reply to Steven J. Dadaian, the Western Region chairman of the Armenian National Committee of America (ANCA) which is a Tashnak organization) referring to the calls for non-airing of the panel discussion, "You have likened our decision to following a documentary on the genocide of Jews during WW II with a panel of Holocaust deniers..., the comparison is not entirely analogous. Germany has fully accepted responsibility for the Holocaust, paid reparations, made apologies, met with survivors, and teaches about it in its schools. As you know, this is not the case with the Armenian Genocide. Turkey's official position on this chapter of history is a key part of the controversy that the documentary and the panel discussion see to examine."<sup>79</sup> In the days to come too the PBS executives did not alter their stance despite the pressure coming from the members of Congress, the press and individuals.

On 17 April a great part (93 percent) of the 348 channels that have contracts with the PBS broadcast aired Andrew Goldberg's "Armenian Genocide" documentary around 10 p.m. The ratings were above that hour's average. 60 percent of these 348 channels aired the panel discussion around 11 p.m. after they showed

77 Armenian National Committee of America, Press Release, 23 February 2006

78 Asbarez, 6 April 2006

79 Armenian National Committee of America, Press Release, 29 February 2006

the documentary. The ratings were half the average for that hour. TV stations based in big cities such as New York, Los Angeles, Boston and Washington simply did not broadcast the panel discussion whereas those in Chicago and Houston did.<sup>80</sup>

The US administration did not become involved in the quarrel on whether the documentary and panel in question should be aired or not. In fact the political regime in the USA would not permit that. Adam Ereli, deputy spokesman for the US State Department, said, “This is a TV program. If you want to watch it, you watch it.”<sup>81</sup>

Turkey’s view was made known via a statement issued by the Turkish Ambassador to Washington Nabi Şensoy, on 18 April 2006 which explains the Turkish stand on the Armenian question in an excellent manner. The text of this statement is reproduced in the “Recent Documents” section of our Review

An analytic approach to the issue leads to the following findings: First of all one sees that the “Armenian Genocide” documentary was made with propaganda purposes considering the way it treats the issue, the past experiences of the producer-director, the fact that it was financed by the Armenians and, also, the fact that it was broadcast in April when the Armenian genocide claims reached a peak.

The PBS could not reject that film though it was a propaganda tool. This can be explained as the PBS being wary of the Armenians. However, since the film is nothing but propaganda, the PBS tried to balance that program off by organizing a panel discussion – most probably to be able to defend itself in court.

The panel discussion in question triggered vigorous reactions from the Armenians. They launched a big campaign to prevent it from being aired. Here, the significant thing was that half of the panelists were supporters of the Armenian views. In other words, those demanding that the panel be banned, were, in fact, trying to impose “censorship” on Balakian and Akçam as well though these two have been avidly supporting the Armenian views.

In dealing with this issue the ANCA, a Tashnak organization, came to the foreground while the other big Armenian organization, the Armenian Assembly of America (AAA) preferred to stay away from the limelight. This is a sign indicating that some of the Armenians in the USA, mostly the well-to-do circles, wanted

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80 Documenting and Debating ‘Genocide’, Michel Gatler, PBS Ombudsman, PBS.org. 23 April 2006

81 PanArmenian.Net, 27 February 2006

to keep away from that quarrel. The same tendency can be observed among the American politicians as well. No more than two senators and thirty House members took part in the campaign launched to have the members of Congress send letters to the PBS. These are small numbers indeed and they show that the Armenian initiative has not been approved by a great majority of the Congressmen.

Most significantly, that move was an attempt to breach the freedom of expression. An attempt was made to “silence” four panelists on the grounds that half of them were “deniers”. In such a situation, while trying not to cancel the panel discussion, even the PBS did not openly announce that not broadcasting the discussion would be a violation of the freedom of expression. Instead, it put forth some other arguments. The PBS must have used that tactic so as not to agitate the highly aggressive Armenian lobby in the USA. However, such evasive attitudes would not suffice to protect the freedom of expression. This is because, unaware of the fact that they are violating a universal value, the Armenians will think it is all right to act in such an extreme manner in the future as well.

## **2. The Ambassadors’ Lectures in America**

Here is another case of the Armenians violating the freedom of expression in the USA: The lecture to be given at the University of South California (USC) by two retired Turkish ambassadors was prevented.

Together with the Center for Eurasian Strategic Studies (ASAM) Chairman retired Ambassador Gündüz Aktan, I went to the USA to give lectures on the Armenian question in New York, Washington, Los Angeles and Chicago during the 19 March – 2 April 2006 period. We held briefings for the Turks in the USA and gave lectures at the University of Columbia in New York and the Georgetown University in Washington. We were scheduled to give a lecture at the University of South California in Los Angeles as well. The event had been announced and the invitations had been sent out. Before we set out for that city we received the news that the lecture had been cancelled. Despite that we went to Los Angeles where we took part in some other activities on our program. In this framework we staged a briefing for the Turks and made speeches at a luncheon organized for us by the World Affairs Council where some Armenians too were present.

As can be guessed, the lecture at the South California University was cancelled at the instigation of the Armenians. On 22 March Steven J. Dadaian, the Western Region chairman of the Armenian National Committee of America (ANCA) which is a Tashnak Party organization, sent a letter to the university’s Center for

Public Diplomacy which was organizing the lecture, saying, “Aktan and Lütem are notorious deniers of the Armenian Genocide... have the extraordinary task of turning the victims of the first genocide of the 20<sup>th</sup> century into the perpetrators,” that they “plan to argue the Turkish government’s official position that there were no massacres of the Armenians,” and that “even if there were massacres, the Armenians deserved them” and these “were not Genocide”.<sup>82</sup>

Dadaian went on to claim in his letter that, “*the facts surrounding the Armenian Genocide are not in dispute. The Armenian Genocide has been recognized by the United Nations, the United States government and even the Ottoman courts who convicted the perpetrators of the Armenian Genocide in absentia. The fact that the USC is going to provide a forum for Turkish foreign agents to deny historical facts by making outright false statements is disturbing and a violation of your own Code of Ethics.*”

Dadaian went on in the following manner: “*USC has an Armenian-American student body of over a thousand students whose families are the direct descendants of the Armenian Genocide perpetrated by Turks and now officially denied by the Turkish government. This panel will undoubtedly be considered an extremely offensive event which disrespects the rights and dignity of not only your students but to all the hundreds of thousands who are the victims and surviving children of the Armenian Genocide.*”

The letter ends with the words, “*if USC chooses to proceed with this program, our organization will be forced to take further action to protest the University.*”

We have focused on this letter in order to show our readers how aggressive and bigoted the Diaspora Armenians, especially the Tashnaks, can be.

There is another case that exemplifies that kind of behavior. The speech Turkish Defense Minister Vecdi Gönül made in Los Angeles at a conference organized by the World Affairs Council was protested by some 2000 demonstrators outside the hotel. The demonstration was organized by the ANCA.<sup>83</sup> Here, it must be noted that the minister’s speech was not on the Armenian question. It was on security and Turkey’s strategic role and relations in Eurasia. Obviously a Turkish politician’s arrival in California is enough reason for the Armenian protesters to stage demonstrations regardless of the issue the politician would discuss. This is basically racist behavior.

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82 Armenian National Committee of America, Western Region, Press Release, 23 March 2006

83 ANCA Press Release, 24 March 2006

Let us return to our main subject. The letter the ANCA sent to the University was full of errors and unfair accusations. Neither Mr. Aktan nor I have ever said on any occasion that the Armenians who died during the relocation had been guilty. We never said that no Armenian massacres had taken place during the relocation. And we did not say that those that were killed had deserved that. Our real position is as follows: Unfortunately, certain deaths did take place during the relocation though in much smaller numbers than alleged by the Armenians. However, according to the 1948 UN Convention for the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide those incidents were not genocide.

Lately, both from the members of the Diaspora and the Armenians in Armenia proper, one hears quite often the argument that just as the Holocaust the Armenian "genocide" is an "undisputable fact". The Holocaust is indeed an undisputable fact because, before everything else, it has been acknowledged by Germany, that is, the perpetrator of the act; it has been recognized by almost all scholars; and it has been proven on the strength of the material evidence found i.e. concentration camps. The Armenian genocide allegations, on the other hand, are being categorically rejected not only by Turkey but also by Azerbaijan. A great majority of the Islamic countries could give Turkey their support on this issue should that be needed. In the academic world, some world-renowned scholars are convinced that the Armenians had not been subjected to genocide though they do point out that massacres had taken place in some places.

The Armenian militants say on every occasion that the UN has recognized the Armenian "genocide". This is not true. In 1985 a report presented to a subcommittee of the UN Human Rights Commission had listed "the Armenian genocide" among the genocides perpetrated in the past. Thanks to Turkey's intervention the subcommittee merely "took note" of the report. The usual process would have been for the subcommittee to uphold the report and to refer it to the Commission where it would be debated. If the Commission decided to endorse it, it could reach the UN General Assembly probably via the Economic and Social Council. The fact that the subcommittee contented itself with "taking note" of the report was, in reality, a failure for the Armenians. However, after some time, the Armenians began to claim that the UN had recognized the Armenian "genocide", referring to the report in question. When the Turkish side disproved their argument, they remained silent for a while but in the end they put forth the same argument once again.

No US administration has taken a decision recognizing the Armenian "geno-

cide”. Making that claim at a time President Bush has taken pains not to use the word “genocide” in his annual message, can only be described as audacity.

The Ottoman courts set up in order to try the war criminals (in line with the Entente Powers’ demand in the aftermath of the World War I) could not possibly have taken decisions “recognizing the Armenian genocide” because, at that time, the notion of genocide did not exist. These courts, called “Divan-ı Harb-i Örfi” (Martial Law Courts), tried many people and convicted some of them for maltreating the Armenians. However, these courts failed to observe due process in general and they acted under political influence with the aim of purging the Unity and Progress Party figures. That brought dishonor on them in a short time and, in the end, they were abolished.

Let us come to the arguments Dadaian made when he tried to have the lecture cancelled. His contention that the lecture would be perceived as an insult by hundreds of thousands of people of Armenian origin, was meaningless. Speeches based on scientific data, speeches that do not contain accusations about anyone, cannot be considered an insult. Obviously Dadaian’s intention was to intimidate the executives of the University by referring to the presence of hundreds of thousands of Armenians in California. In fact, at the end of his letter he issues a threat, saying that if the University insisted on hosting the event the Armenian organization would take further action.

The substance of the issue is that two persons coming from Turkey to express their opinions on a specific subject have been prevented from speaking up. This is a violation of the freedom of expression in a country such as the USA that cherishes this.

As soon as it received that letter from Dadaian the University’s Center for Public Diplomacy cancelled the lecture. It is understood that the University took that decision mainly because it takes seriously the threats issued by the Tashnak organization. The truth is that the militant Armenians in California are not merely “sounding” aggressive. They resorted to violence in the past. The memory of the murders they committed is still fresh in the minds. The Turkish Consul-General in Los Angeles Mehmet Baydar and his deputy Bahadır Demir were murdered by an Armenian in Los Angeles on 27 January 1973. Nine years later, on 28 January 1982, yet another Turkish Consul-General in Los Angeles, Kemal Arıkan, was shot by the Armenians. In the early 1980’s, renowned historian Stanford Shaw was harassed by the Armenians at the University of California in Los Angeles due

to his conviction that the Armenian “genocide” did not happen, A bomb was thrown at his house and he had to take shelter in Turkey due to security considerations. Currently, it is no secret that the crime rate is high among the Armenians in California, especially among those that have recently migrated there.

To conclude, it has been seen that the Armenians in California are using violence or the threat to resort to violence as a political tool. In fact, it was by using that tool that they brought about the cancellation of the lecture we had wanted to deliver.





# REFLECTIONS OF THE SECOND PROCLAMATION OF THE OTTOMAN PARLIAMENTARY SYSTEM ON EASTERN ANATOLIA AND ITS EFFECT ON THE ARMENIAN-KURDISH RELATIONS

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## **Abstract:**

The re-proclamation of the Ottoman Parliamentary system with its representations of independence, justice and equality, caused a short-lived state of intercommunal peace in the Ottoman Empire. It was clearly understood that centuries of mounting problems within the Empire could not be swept under the carpet with these magical words in such a short time. The Proclamation of the Ottoman Parliamentary system was construed in the Eastern provinces as appropriating power to the Armenians in government, while it was heralded as the advent of an independent Armenia during the period of 1912-13, when reforms regarding the Armenians had come to the fore. The Proclamation of the Ottoman Parliamentary system forged a gap between the Armenians (who took part in the victory), and Kurdish groups (who saw themselves as the essence of the government and regarded the Party of Union and Progress as illegitimate). Russian ambassadors, who were also operating as agents, took advantage of the ill sentiment between these groups and escalated the inherent problems of the region thus causing tensions to reach a crescendo.

**Key Words:** The Proclamation of the Ottoman Parliamentary system, Armenians, Kurds, Party of Union and Progress, Bedirhanlı Said, Mir Muhiy, Molla Selim, and Bitlis Rebellion

## **Öz:**

II. Meşrutiyet'in ilanı hürriyet, adalet ve eşitliği temsil ettiği için Osmanlı unsurları arasında oldukça kısa süren bir mutluluk havası yaratmıştır. Osmanlı Devleti'nin asırlarca biriken sorunlarının böyle kısa bir sürede ve bu sihirli sözcüklerle bir anda hallinin mümkün olmadığı hemen anlaşılmıştır. Meşrutiyet Doğu illerinde Ermenilerin devlet yönetimine ortak edilmesi, Ermeni ıslahatının gündeme geldiği 1912-13'lerde ise bağımsız Ermenistan'ın kuruluşu olarak algılandı. Meşrutiyet kendilerini devletin asli unsurları olarak gören ve İttihat ve

Terakki'yi gayrı meşru ilan eden Kürt gruplarıyla, Meşrutiyet'in zaferine ortak olan Ermeniler arasındaki uçurumu derinleştirdi. Rus ajan konsolosların mevcut hoşnutsuzluğu körüklemesi, Birinci Dünya Savaşı arifesinde bölgede tansiyonu doruk noktaya ulaştırdı.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Meşrutiyet, Ermeniler, Kürtler, İttihat ve Terakki, Bedirhanlı Said, Mir Muhiy, Molla Selim, Bitlis İsyanı

## INTRODUCTION

The proclamation of the Ottoman Parliamentary system, in order to avoid disintegration of the Ottoman Empire and to prevent the desires of some ethnic groups to establish their own independent states via providing them with the rights of representation was not enough to connect the Muslims and non-Muslims components to state. The independence desires of the Greeks, Bulgarians, Albanians, Armenians and that of some other ethnic groups have already shined on the first day of the convention of the Parliament, since they brought their ethnic programs to the agenda. Within this context Armenian wish to establish an independent Armenian state in Eastern Anatolia matured by the aid of the advantages of the proclamation of Ottoman parliamentary system; as a result, it happened to be a big problem for the Ottoman Empire. Spotlighting of the Armenian reforms has provided the Western states with necessary inputs as well as it made Muslim community feel anxious about it. It stimulated old hostilities. Sultan Abdulhamid, who made him called as "Father of the Kurds" and prevented the activities of the Armenian committees at Eastern provinces by the aid of the Hamidiye troops, which he established and generated as a security precaution against the Russian ambitions, caused an anxious anticipation at the Eastern provinces. The legitimacy problem of the Party of Union and Progress caused serious disturbances due to its policies with respect to some significant issues regarding Armenians.

## I. OTTOMAN PARLIAMENTARY SYSTEM AND EXPECTATIONS

The First Young Turk Congress, realized on 4 February 1902 as a result of internal and international attempts of Young Turks in order to return to a system based upon parliament and constitutional monarchy, is an important turning point. This congress, in which whole Ottoman elements were represented, has been the first significant sign of governmental polarizations that would also go

on after the proclamation of the Ottoman parliamentary system. The two most significant actors of this polarization were Prince Sabahattin and Ahmet Rıza. Principles of Prince Sabahattin called as 'Private Enterprise and Decentralization' (*Teşebbüs-ü Şahsi ve Adem-i Merkeziyet*) recognized every external intervention in order to realize a revolution for establishing constitutional monarchy as legitimate, and provided executive, judicial and fiscal autonomy via dividing different regions of state into special local administrations. Such an understanding impressed the representatives of the non-Muslims communities, who desired to have autonomy and independence afterwards. The representatives of the *Tashnak* committee, which was the strongest of the revolutionary Armenian committees, wanted to collaborate with the unionists and stood by their side. The other wing's representative Ahmet Rıza, on the other side, was objecting to violence and foreign intervention. According to Ahmet Rıza, decentralization "*was nothing but vending state to the foreigners*". Ahmet Rıza used to believe that the structure of the Ottoman society composed by various ethnic groups should have been maintained within a modern and centralized state dominated by the Turkish element<sup>1</sup>.

At the beginning of 1906, some activities were held to re-organize the Young Turk movement, which lost its action power as a result of the discrepancy mentioned above; accordingly, Prince Sabahattin was given the duty to lay a program. The segmentation within the Young Turk movement became definite after the insertion of the decentralization principle into the program by Prince Sabahattin. He established the 'Private Enterprise and Decentralization Association' (*Teşebbüs-ü Şahsi ve Adem-i Merkeziyet Cemiyeti*) in 1906. The charter of the association anticipated full and large-scaled rights in terms of provincial finance for general provincial assemblies, which would be organized with respect to the numerical proportion of each ethnic element composing the Ottoman society. Furthermore, the essence of the parliamentary election to be made out of the provincial assembly members was acknowledged<sup>2</sup>.

While the arguments were intensifying within the Young Turk circles regarding both the administrative future of the Ottoman state and place of the ethnic components of the Empire within this administrative structure, some developments accelerating the parliamentary system were taking place. *Osmanlı Hürriyet Cemiyeti* (The Ottoman Liberty Association) was founded during a meeting, in

1 Tanık Zafer Tunaya, *Türkiyede Siyasal Partiler*, (Istanbul: 1984), p. 21; Sina Akşin, *Jöntürkler ve İttihat ve Terakki*, (Istanbul: 1987), p. 57.

2 Akşin, *op.cit.*, p. 47-48.

which 10 people (most of them were the 3<sup>rd</sup> Army officers) participated at Mithat Şükrü's house on September 1906. It is interesting that the members of this committee are the masons. The association has united with the Party of Union and Progress on 27 December 1907<sup>3</sup>.

Within the declaration after the Second Young Turk Congress, presided by the collective chairmanship of Ahmet Rıza, Prince Sabahattin and Malumyan, it was expressed that the communities composing the Ottoman state had managed to unite and that they would insist on revolution until they reached their aim. The congress decided to have Turkish, Arabic, Kurdish, Albanian, Armenian, Bulgarian and Greek pamphlets printed and have them distributed among the peasants, civil servants, soldiers, officers and bureaucratic circles<sup>4</sup>. The hostility towards Abdülhamid had become such a blind fanaticism among the Young Turks that they could not see what kind of results would emerge out of their collaboration with the non-Muslim elements especially with the Armenians. As a result of these developments, Resneli Niyazi Bey had started a rebellion by the aid of his forces on 3 July 1908. When the Ottoman parliamentary system was proclaimed in Manastır on 23 July, Abdülhamid had to accept this *fait accompli* on the night of 23/24 July.

Due to the proclamation of the Ottoman parliamentary system, it was obvious that a significant pleasure and peace ambience has been felt within the country, though it lasted short. It was deeply believed that the new regime would be the guarantee of the peace among the Ottoman peoples. The whole elements composing the Empire, Muslims and non-Muslims, were kissing and hugging each other on the streets and organizing smart ceremonies within which prayers on behalf of the proclamation were made and swears for its protection took place. One of the dominant groups among the Armenians, as it had collaborated with the Young Turks some time before the proclamation and had spent so much money and effort for the realization of the revolution, was thinking that its political effect would grow. The Armenians, who had immigrated to the other countries during Abdülhamid era, started to return with victory expressions and they turned out to be Armenian nationalists after the proclamation. The Armenian rebels, who had returned, were welcomed by smart ceremonies. For committee members, who had been killed as a result of their revolutionary activities during Abdülhamid era, mourning was held and sermons were given. The belief, that the new regime would be the guarantee among the Ottoman components, was refreshed<sup>5</sup>.

3 Tunaya, *op.cit.*, p. 21-22; Akşin, *op.cit.*, p. 60-63.

4 Akşin, *op.cit.*, pp.65-68.

5 Mehmet Kasım, *Talat Paşanın Anıları*, (İstanbul: 1986), p. 59.

Macedonian bands climbed down to the city and proclaimed that they would devote themselves to the order. Revolutionary Armenian associations have announced that they had stopped armed conflicts. Sabah Gülyan who was the Head of the Armenian Hinçak Committee and from Caucasian Armenians stated that “*We, Hinçaks, will give up our revolutionary activities and try to promote our country with whole of our wealth*” at Beyoglu Surp Yervartyun Church. Aknoni, who was the head of another Armenian revolutionary association called *Tashnaksütyun*, mentioned about their Armenian policy as such: “*One of the most important duties of Tashnaksagans is to protect the Ottoman regime, serve for the integration of the Ottoman tribes, and collaborate with the Party of Union and Progress*”.<sup>6</sup> Actually, Armenians viewed the proclamation of the Ottoman parliamentary system as a steppingstone on the path to the independence. Maintenance of liberty atmosphere would provide favorable conditions that would enable them to reach their aims. However, the opportunities brought by the proclamation of the Ottoman parliamentary system set them free, with respect to their target to reach the independent Armenia, by limiting legal margins and hiding behind these margins<sup>7</sup>. The Armenians, who were backed up by the Party of Union and Progress, was trying to set necessary conditions at the Eastern provinces by making use of this freedom. By this purpose, it was being mentioned that the Kurds, especially the Hamidiye troops, had been opposed to the Ottoman parliamentary system and had existed as a threat against the regime. Within the first article of the adopted resolution during the 5<sup>th</sup> general meeting of the Tashnak Association, it was stated “*...residuals of the feudal landlords and privileged class, benefited from ancient regime, are looking forward to hold a counter operation as they view the Ottoman parliamentary system as a threat against their own wealth*”. Within the 4<sup>th</sup> paragraph of the resolution it was written “*talented organs of our association need to fight in every way and at every place, when necessitated, in order to defend the Ottoman parliamentary system against any possible attack*”; they expressed that they would not allow such a counter operation<sup>8</sup>. Enmity of the Armenians to the proclamation of the Ottoman parliamentary system and their will to make use of the new regime, as much as possible, for their independence were expressed by the declaration of “*Free Armenia*” messages from Istanbul Beyoğlu Theatre scenes, where the parliament which they had joined with 13 deputies, was opened. Their persistence in reaching their aims was confirmed by the Adana Rebellion during 31 March events.

6 İsmet Parmaksız, *Ermeni Komitelerinin İhtilal Hareketleri ve Besledikleri Emeller*, (Ankara: 1981), pp. 33-34.

7 Garo Sasuni, *Kürt Ulusal Hareketleri ve 15. Yüzyıldan Günümüze Ermeni-Kürt İlişkileri*, translated by Bedros Zartaryan-Memo Yetkin, (Istanbul: 1992), p. 143.

8 Sasuni, *op. cit.*, p.145-146.

The Party of Union and Progress, which thought itself as the symbol of justice in the perceptions of Armenians and Europeans as well as the supporter of unity of components (*ittihad-ı anasır*), has proved its attitude by making 47 Turks but only 1 Armenian hang up at *divan-ı harb-i örfi* established after the rebellion<sup>9</sup>. This rebellion proved that the attitudes of the Armenians have never changed both before and after 1908.

Within the declaration submitted by the Tashnak Committee to 1910 Copenhagen Congress, phases such as “*our activities are completely political and revolutionary. Our committee has its activities secretly at nights until 1908; exercises and armaments have been realized always at nights, committee members have tried not to be seen at around during daytimes. However, our activities go on apparently during daytime also at the sensitive regions of the Ottoman state nowadays. On the other side, we have well organized revolutionary guerillas at regions populated by Armenians*”<sup>10</sup> manifests this reality. Committees such as Tashnak, Hınçak, Veragaz and some others, all of which proclaimed that they had given up their arms and tried to exercise a full effect on the Armenian community, started to get organized much more easily and open up branches all over the country as a result of the ambience of freedom. Within newspapers, books and magazines; they milled Ottoman-Turkish hostility and desired Armenian nationalism to be stimulated. Military and logistical trainings were held among the Armenians. Revolutionist teachers at schools taught hostility against the Turk in books which children were made read<sup>11</sup>. Armenian terrorist associations, which had turned to be nightmares of bipartisan Armenian community at Eastern Anatolia, were also ready to act in order to be fed by blood. Within 19 November 1910 report of Russian Consul at Bitlis, it was written that the Armenians, who did not act in accordance with the Tashnak committee’s orders, would be killed and these murders would be discharged on the Turks<sup>12</sup>.

9 Yılmaz Öztuna, “Ermeni Sorununun Oluştığı Siyasal Ortam”, *Osmanlı’nın Son Döneminde Ermeniler*, (Ankara: 2002), p.58. Talat and Cemal Pashas (among the most influential names of the Union of Progress Party), who tried to please Westerns and executed Muslim Turkish community for this purpose and thought that they would stop the revolutionary movements of the Armenians by pulling them into the legitimate political environment, would later loose their lives one day in a foreign country with Armenian bullets.

10 Dikran Kevorkyan, “*Ermeni Meselesinde Tehcire Amil Olan Sebepler*”, *Tarih Boyunca Türklerin Ermeni Toplumuna İle İlişkileri Sempozyumu*, (Ankara: 1985), p.299; *Belgelerle Ermeni Sorunu*, Gnkur. Basımevi, (Ankara: 1983), p.152.

11 Parmaksız, *op. cit.*, p.35-42.

12 *Belgelerle Ermeni Sorunu, op.cit.*, p.152.

## II. EASTERN ANATOLIAN PROGRAMS OF PARLIAMENTARY GOVERNMENTS

After the re-proclamation of the Ottoman parliamentary system, the Party of Union and Progress started to look for ways in order to make principles such as freedom, equality and brotherhood, which were necessities of the Ottoman parliamentary system, applicable within the Eastern provinces in which especially Muslims and non-Muslims lived together (which happens to be the case in various places of Anatolia). It would not be so easy for the Young Turks, who had newly met political and governmental mechanisms, to make these different societies, which were pursuing hostile feelings among others, live together in brotherhood. Unique religious conservatism of the Eastern Anatolia would never adopt equality with non-Muslim components, which was a promise of the Ottoman parliamentary system. Moreover, Non-Muslim components have not had an effort such as being equal with the Muslims whom they found uncivilized when compared to themselves.

At Eastern provinces, where the Kurds and Armenians live together, the Ottoman parliamentary system was viewed anxiously by the Muslim components, on the other side; it was welcomed joyfully by the Armenians and other non-Muslim communities. Armenians have immediately recognized and owned the Ottoman parliamentary system that they view as a new opportunity in order to reach their dream of independent Armenia for which they had been struggling for a long time. By rebelling against the government at first opportunity due to the opportunities generated by the constitution, they aimed to gain an autonomous government and independency at the end as a result of a prospective intervention that would be held by Europe<sup>13</sup>. At the beginning, they took care of holding their activities more secretly and did not make the government realize them, by imitating as supporters of the Ottoman parliamentary system. The Armenians, by making use of this favorable ambiance, had a slander campaign started opposed to the Kurds leaving in the same region.

### a. The Solution of Social Problems

Ottoman authorities started to organize some sets of regulations at Eastern Anatolia as an outcome of the proclamation of the Ottoman parliamentary system. One of the reformist targets at Eastern Anatolia was to guarantee the recog-

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13 *Kasım op.cit.*, p.24.



dition of the parliamentary system as the only authority by the community via neutralizing the effects of the powerful families and despotic landowners. Struggle against the privileged persons and groups at Eastern Anatolia and their destruction were among the responsibilities of the new Ottoman regime. Landowners, sheikhs, masters and tribe chiefs also existed within the Armenian and Nestorian communities, which were Eastern Christians. Problematic and hierarchical relations between the Kurdish landowners and ordinary peoples were also the case for the Armenian chiefs and ayans. For this reason, governments of this new regime had to pay attention not only on the feudal relations among the Muslims but also on that of among the non-Muslims.

The most mistreated part in the region was a mass of community called as '*maraba*'. The Muslim community, which did not have any tribal links, was under the oppression and exploitation of the masters and tribes. Not only the mass of Muslim community but also the non-Muslims and especially the Armenians, which were not connected to any revolutionary associations, were similarly under the oppression of their own chiefs. However, the Armenians were much luckier than the Kurds, since they had some institutions to appeal in order to discuss their problems when necessary. The association of Armenian representatives (*murahtasahane*) and patriarchate was closely dealing with their problems. They were able to make the foreign states know about their problems via these institutions. Direct protectorate of foreign countries over the Armenians forced the Ottoman parliamentary government to give priority to the problems of the Armenians rather than that of the Kurds in order to block these interventions accordingly<sup>14</sup>.

The government was also trying not to be insensitive about social affairs of the Muslims. It was trying to cooperate with the local authorities within the region in order to hold radical reforms in a traditional manner which has accumulated for ages. However, equality, justice and liberty were not only too early for the Eastern communities to realize due to the conditions of the period but also a long lasting social program was being necessitated. By looking at the fact that this structure still prevails even at contemporary period, we can see how repressing and difficult the responsibility of the Party of Union and Progress. The tribal chiefs, landowners and some religious personalities, eventually, would not welcome their status being undermined. Reform in Eastern Anatolia meant for loss of impact of feudal fractions over the community, thus this would not be welcomed in a pleasant

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14 *Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivleri* (BOA), *Dahiliye* (DH), *Siyasi* (SYS), 23-1, Lef 135-146. Bitlis Vilayeti'nden Dahiliye Nezareti'ne Gönderilen 15 Mart 1911 Tarihli Tahrirat. (Official letter dated 15 March 1911 sent from Bitlis Province to the Ministry of Interior).

manner for sure. Suddenly, the local authorities that had not desired to loose their statuses became supporters of the Ottoman parliamentary system. Within the reports they declared to the government, they included pleasing information in accordance with such that the parliamentary system had given its fruits suddenly within the community and that the community has started to ignore the impact of tribal chiefs and landowners<sup>15</sup>.

One of the first attempts of the governments of new regime to destroy the feudal structure within the Eastern provinces was the one against İbrahim Pasha, who had been the chief of *Milli* tribe, which was among the most powerful tribes in the region for a long time. This tribe, which was included within the Hamidiye troops, has caused anxiety and horror to be experienced at Diyarbakır and region around by making irresponsibly use of opportunities and rights provided by the state. Although the state had disposed so much effort before the proclamation of the Ottoman parliamentary system in order to destroy Ibrahim Pasha, it was the success of the parliamentary regime to end this problem once for all. Although The Party of Union and Progress could not break the existing social structure at once, it did not let the emergence of new power circles in the region. Liberty atmosphere provided by the Ottoman parliamentary system was desired to be misused by the previous centers of power. The most apparent example of this was the struggle against *Bedirhanlı tribe*. As a matter of fact, the attempt of the *Bedirhanlı* family to redevelop old feudalism of Bedirhan Bey by through increasing their influences in the Eastern provinces (Cizre as centre) after the proclamation of the Ottoman parliamentary system<sup>16</sup>, has had the priority among the issues with which the government had to deal immediately. Warnings made by the local administrations in accordance with *Bedirhanlı* attempt to undertake the influence discharged by *Milli* tribe chief İbrahim Pasha<sup>17</sup> were taken seriously and activities of *Bedirhanlı* tribe within the region were pursued critically. On the other side, especially religious authorities and the sheikhs had started to oppose against emergence of new power centers other than that of governmental author-

15 *BOA, DH. SYS.*, 23/1, Lef 112/2-4. Erzurum Vilayeti'nin 1 Mart 1911 Tarihli Mütalaa. (Opinion about Erzurum Province dated 1 March 1911).

16 *BOA, DH. SYS.*, 24/2-1, Lef 11-12. Diyarbakır Vilayeti'nden Dahiliye Nezareti'ne Gönderilen 1 Mart 1911 Tarihli Tahrirat; (Official letter dated 1 March 1911 sent from Erzurum province to the Ministry of Interior) *BOA, DH. SYS.*, 24/2-2, Lef 48. Kürdistan Muhabirinden "Gayet Ehemmiyetli Bir Mektup" Başlığıyla Siirt'ten Gönderilen Mehmet İmzalı 28 Mayıs 1911 Tarihli Bend. (The Document dated 28 May 1911 signed by Mehmet and sent by the Reporter of Kurdistan titled "Quite Important Letter" from Siirt).

17 *BOA, DH. SYS.*, 24/2-2, Lef 54. Mamuret-el Aziz Vilayeti'nden Dahiliye Nezareti'ne Gönderilen 1 Ağustos 1911 Tarihli Tahrirat. (Official letter dated 1 August 1911 sent from Mamuret-el Aziz province to the Ministry of Interior).

ity and this was caused by concerns of classes, which thought that their interests had been threatened (not by the development of social consciousness due to the proclamation of the Ottoman parliamentary system). Within their telegrams to the government, these religious authorities and sheikhs of Siirt region stated that the *Bedirhanlı* tribe and their father Bedirhan Bey had never been supported by the inhabitants of the region and that they had aimed to create a Kurdish problem<sup>18</sup>.

Inability of the government to produce serious solutions for region's social problems exacerbated the situation. The expectations of the community regarding the parliamentary system had not been satisfied. Territorial problems had not been overcome, essential attention had not been paid on education and activities of the Armenians within the region had not been prevented. All of these had increased the mistrust against Party of Union and Progress government. When gradually increasing Russian danger was added to this mistrust, ordinary peoples started to gravitate towards local power centers more. With this respect, *Bedirhanlı* tribe became a new source of hope for the community. They were also able to gain the confidence of *Sincar Yezidi* groups and the Kurdish landowners from Şırnak and Garzan<sup>19</sup>.

Probably, the most important problem for the Party of Union and Progress was to provide the Muslims and non-Muslims living at the Eastern provinces with a reconciliation atmosphere. The government has tried to take care of this since the beginning. There are some significant indications about the success of the proclamation of the Ottoman parliamentary system during its first two years at Eastern Anatolia. It has been thought that basic rights of everyone were protected through equality in front of law, treatments between Muslim and non-Muslim components were held in accordance with neutrality principle and that these two policies ensured peace and order in the region. Accordingly, the dominant view in the region was that the prevalence of this attitude would result in better outcomes. In order to make this system more effective, local authorities should explain the benefits of the parliamentary system to the public and those disappointed ones should have been warmed up towards the state through some presents and tips when necessary<sup>20</sup>.

18 *BOA, DH.SYS.*, 24/2-4, Lef 47-49. Bitlis Vali Vekili Ulvi'nin 9 Şubat 1912 Tarihli Telgrafnamesi (Telegram of Bitlis Deputy -Governor dated 9 February 1912).

19 *BOA, DH.SYS.*, 100/4, Lef 61. Diyarbakır Vilayeti'nden Dahiliye Nezareti'ne Gönderilen 19 Ocak 1913 Tarihli Şifretelgrafname (Cyphered telegram dated 19 January 1913 sent from Diyarbakır Province to the Ministry of Interior).

20 *BOA, DH.SYS.*, 23-1, Lef 135-146. Bitlis Vilayeti'nden Dahiliye Nezareti'ne Gönderilen 15 Mart 1911 Tarihli Mütalaa. (Opinion from Bitlis Province to The Ministry of Interior dated 15 March 1911).

Defeats in the Balkan wars, Russian ambitions regarding the Straits and Eastern Anatolia and role of the Armenians in the realization of these ambitions have caused the old problems during Abdülhamid era to be resurfaced with the emergence of the Armenian reform as an agenda item. Numerous unquestioned problems, such as oppression of the Kurdish tribes on the Armenians, seizure by violence and murder, kidnapped girls, rapes, misuse of justice and forced changes of religion, came to the fore. Even at these years, when the Armenian associations increased their hostile attitudes, the government had tried to regulate relations between the Armenians and the Kurds and to ensure reconciliation among different communities living there. Some righteous Kurdish patriots, who tried to prevent the conflicts between the Armenians and the Kurds, in order to make others to view their interrelation as a model, were awarded<sup>21</sup>.

#### **b. The Settlement of the Territorial Disputes**

One of the issues, with which the Party of Union of Progress dealt after the proclamation of the Ottoman parliamentary system, was the territorial disputes between the Armenians and the Kurds. As known, some of the Armenians had immigrated to some other countries among which Russia had the priority after Sason Rebellion by signing a document stipulating that they would not return and selling their estates, goods and properties. One of the tests of the Ottoman parliamentary system, regarding the Armenian case, was recognition of the citizenships of the Armenians after they had turned back to the country and their allegations over estates and properties after the proclamation of the Ottoman parliamentary system. These territorial conflicts caused long lasting disturbances between old and new owners<sup>22</sup>.

The Armenian Patriarch disposed great efforts for the immigrants in order to make them both gained their old estates and properties back and recognized as citizens by claiming that their immigration to Russia and the aforementioned documents were signed under compulsion. In fact, Armenians had either used some part of these estates without prior registration, or they had sold their registered estates without taking their real price into account while leaving the country. They blamed the Kurdish tribes for buying their estates with low prices or acquiring them by force. Besides this, they were planning to acquire new estates.

21 *BOA, Bab-ı Ali Evrak Odası* (BEO), 314602. Dahiliye Nezareti'nden Sadarete Gönderilen 10 Temmuz 1913 Tarihli Tahrirat. (Official letter dated 10 July 1913 sent by the Ministry of Interior to the Prime Ministry).

22 *BOA, DH.SYS.*, 23-1/Lef 130-134. Bitlis Vilayeti'nden Dahiliye Nezareti'ne Gönderilen 22 Kasım 1910 Tarihli Rapor. (Report dated 22 November 1910 sent from Bitlis Province to the Ministry of Interior).

They claimed that the lands with borders to their territories should have been given to them at the land distribution campaign that would be held by the government in order to make agriculturally inconvenient lands revitalized. If still unregistered, they claimed direct access to those places<sup>23</sup>.

The Ottoman government had given the lands emptied by the Armenians to the Muslim immigrants in exchange of a document by the aid of the Commission of Settlement of the Immigrants (*İskan-ı Muhacirin Komisyonu*) and the local administrations. This resulted in further disputes, the government accepted to pay cash for the territories, except for the ones occupied by the tribes, used by the Muslim inhabitants in order to please both the inhabitants and the Armenians. Regarding the Armenians' estate and property trials, on the other hand, the registrations were investigated. However, no registrations were found proving that these estates belonged to the Armenians. The government advised the Armenians to follow their cases legally. Most of the people that Armenians had legally complained were members of local administrations. The continuous impact of these people on the local officers and the population triggered the Armenian objections. They manifested that they had not trusted the local courts.

The government referred these estate trials of the Armenians to the Ministry of Interior. The ministry started to work by demanding detailed reports regarding the issue from the provinces in which the estate disputes were prominent. In accordance with the reports, it was notified that, first of all, Mobile Delegation of Reconciliation Judges (*Seyyar Hey'et-i Hakime-i Sulhiye*), within which two tribal chiefs selected by governor or selected out of members of provincial court of first instance, an officer or instructor licensed by the taxation bureaus of the Land Registration Department (*Tapu Sicil Muhafızlığı*), a minutes clerk and a clerk from the Land Registration Department would function, should have been established in order to get over the estate trials. It was stipulated that a court president or someone provincially selected out of the court of first instance would head this commission<sup>24</sup>.

After negotiations and arguments had lasted for some time, the case was concluded by the explanatory document prepared by the Ministry of Interior. Accordingly, lands used by the immigrants placed there after the Armenians' leave during Abdülhamid era was returned to their real owners as long as claimants

23 Cezmi Eraslan, 'I. Sasun İsyanı Sonrasında Osmanlı Devleti'nin Karşılaştığı Problemler', (*Kafkas Araştırmaları II*, İstanbul 1996, pp. 88-90).

24 BOA, *DH.SYS*, 23-1/Lef 120-129. Bitlis Vilayeti'nden Dahiliye Nezareti'ne Gönderilen 8 Kasım 1910 Tarihli Rapor. (Report dated 8 November 1910 sent from Bitlis Province to the Ministry of Interior). Within the report, a proposal with 22 paragraphs was submitted in order to solve the estate trials.

showed reliable evidence, and the immigrants were shown other places. If the immigrant contributed something to the land by his own effort, cost of it was paid back to him as long as its cost was taken from the first owner. Furthermore, if any of the citizens within the region proved that his estate had been captured after the Sason rebellion, existing disposal documents and title deeds were being considered as null<sup>25</sup>.

Attitudes of the government towards the estate cases resulted in intensive objections of deputies of the Eastern provinces. As an outcome of this case, a powerful reaction was generated against the Party of Union and Progress. However, the government that ignored those reactions chosen to apply the resolutions it adopted seriously, on the other hand, the Armenians had not found the resolutions adopted satisfactorily. For this reason, they called attentions of the European states on these resolutions on the one hand and tried to block the application of the resolution by lengthening the process and raising crisis on the other<sup>26</sup>. The estate trials showed that the actual problem of the Armenians was not economic. Another Armenian intention was to generate a gap between the Kurds and the state and as well as between the local administrations and the central government. This was the only way for them to build a ground for external intervention.

These resolutions adopted by the state regarding the estate cases evoked anger among the inhabitants and the tribes. Having lands, which they have been cropping and harvesting for 17-18 years, taken away suddenly was an economic blow as well as it offended their proud. Intense revenge and anger feelings among most of the aggrieved ones blistered day by day against the Party of Union and Progress. Some of them left the Ottoman territories and started to expect aid from Russia by taking refuge in Iranian territories which were under influence of Russia.

This attitude of the government has so much spoilt the Armenians that they started not to pay crop tax (*aşar*) to the Kurdish tax collectors (*mültezim*) for their villages in following days. Besides, they caused numerous events to take place in some various places by attacking collectors who came to collect tax. This kind of local reactions resulted in nothing but escalation of the existing tension between the Kurds and the Armenians<sup>27</sup>. Although how to settle the estate dispute had been concluded by the state, its application was not so easy. This issue not only continued to be a significant problem for the Party of Union of Progress in the

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25 Eraslan, *op. cit.*, p.92.

26 Kasım, *op.cit.*, p. 65-66.

27 BOA, BEO., 309426. Sadarettin Adliye, Mezahip ve Hariciye Nezaretlerine Gönderilen 21 Aralık 1912 Tarihli Tahrirat. (Official letter dated 21 December 1912 sent from the Prime Ministry to the Ministries of Interior, Foreign Affairs and Religious Sects.)

following years but it also could not stop continuation of the Armenians' grievances under the protection of European states.

### c. The Reformation of The Hamidiye Troops

Hamidiye troops, which were founded in order not only to maintain security of frontier tribes at Abdülhamid era but also to take the tribes under the control of state and to prevent harmful activities of the Armenian associations at the Eastern provinces, had always been criticized by the Young Turks. These troops, which had provided undeniable services for depriving revolutionist Armenians of reaching their targets, were continuously depicted as a matter of complaint by the Armenians before and after the Ottoman parliamentary system. These troops, which were devoted to Abdülhamid by heart, were seen as a subject of threat both by the Part of Union and Progress government and the revolutionist Armenians since the proclamation of the Ottoman parliamentary system. For this reason, the government found it principally adequate to have these troops gradually disintegrated and to decrease their possible reactions to the reforms, which it wanted to hold within the region.

By acting in accordance with this purpose, the government had completed new organizational framework of the Hamidiye troops by 1910. Established commissions, by examining registration records of the troops, made ones whose military service age had come registered; made troops have their horses examined, gave new positions to notables of the tribe and name of these troops was changed as Tribe Troops (*Aşiret Alayları*). By giving new flags and charters, it was tried to have them devoted to the new regime's government<sup>28</sup>. However, these regulations were not enough to make negative impressions about the troops disappeared. Later, these forces, which were composed of 64 troops, reduced to 23-24 troops. However, the issue was extremely vulnerable. The tribes, which were kept outside or were not happy with the new regulations, might have constituted an element of threat. External agents might have stimulated a Kurdish attack against the Armenians by unfolding the old issues. The slightest stir was already enough for the Armenians to squall. Indeed, some of the Tribe Troops' officers had a meeting in some villages of Bulanık and Muş in order to request modification of the decisions of the Commission of Order (*Tensik Komisyonu*) regarding "not to wear military clothes except duty times"<sup>29</sup>. The Armenians, who had learnt about this

28 Bayram Kodaman, *Sultan II. Abdülhamid Devri Doğu Anadolu Politikası*, (Ankara: 1987), p.62-62.

29 *BOA, DH.SYS.*, 71/1, Lef 2. Bitlis Vilayeti'nden Dahiliye Nezareti'ne Gönderilen 2 Nisan 1911 Tarihli Şifre. (Code dated 2 April 1911 sent from Bitlis Province to the Ministry of Interior).

meeting and wanted to misuse it, made their local authorities awake. They came to the central office of the Party of Union and Progress and stated that the Kurdish chiefs had adopted resolutions, by meeting at various villages of Bulanık and Muş, against the Armenians and warned the government by claiming that the tribe chiefs Kurd Musa<sup>30</sup> and his brother Kasım Bey had also participated in these meetings<sup>31</sup>. However, researches showed that the Kurds had not met against the Armenians and also that Kurd Musa and Kasım Bey had not participated in those meetings<sup>32</sup>. The government did not neglect to adopt precautions in order to avoid the reforms regarding the tribe troops, which government tried to hold, from being sabotaged by the Armenians. Before the application of new arrangements, it had been decided that active and skillful commanders should have been appointed for each troop and deployment of infantry troops within regions, where these troops took place, was suggested<sup>33</sup>. Extension of these new regulations triggered disturbances among the tribes. Propaganda, concerning that the troops would be wiped made by the opponents of the Party of Union and Progress, manifested its impacts immediately and signs of disobedience and indiscipline were experienced<sup>34</sup>. Some part of the troops was kept out of staff by these new regulations. The government had taken care of connecting the most important tribe chiefs during this process to itself and worked for provision of the devotion of the tribes, which were inclined towards Russia. Some part of *Zilanlı* and *Celali* Tribes, as they were living in regions dominated by Russia and Iran, were included within these new arrangements<sup>35</sup>.

30 Kurd Musa Bey, who prevented the activities of a priest called Bogos Naryan that aimed to make the Armenians rebel at Muş and around, was slandered by the Armenians of Bitlis region between 1889-1890 and was introduced as an Armenian enemy by various newspapers and institutions abroad. Government made this issue that was misused enough by foreign states ended by deporting Musa Bey to Medina. Musa Bey, who turned back to Bitlis after the proclamation of the Ottoman parliamentary system, could not rescue from being the target of the Armenians once more. For detailed information about Musa Bey event see., Fatih Ünal, "Ermeni Olaylarından Bir Safha; Kürt Musa Bey Olayı", (*Kafkas Araştırmaları II*, İstanbul, 1996, p.51-64).

31 *BOA, DH.SYS.*, 71/1, Lef 9. Erzurum Vilayeti'nden Dahiliye Nezareti'ne Gönderilen 27 Mart 1911 Tarihli Tahrirat. . (Official letter dated 27 March 1911 sent from Erzurum Province to the Ministry of Interior).

32 *BOA, DH.SYS.*, 71/1, Lef 5. Erzurum Vilayeti'nden Dahiliye Nezareti'ne Gönderilen 9 Nisan 1911 Tarihli Tahrirat. (Official letter dated 9 April 1911 sent from Erzurum Province to the Ministry of Interior).

33 *BOA, DH.SYS.*, 24/2-4, Lef 114/1-2. Erzurum Vilayeti'nden Dahiliye Nezareti'ne Gönderilen 19 Mart 1911 Tarihli Tahrirat (Official letter dated 19 March 1911 sent from Erzurum Province to the Ministry of Interior).

34 *BOA, DH.SYS.*, 23/1, Lef 45. Harbiye Nezareti Süvari Dairesi Tarafından Dahiliye Nezareti'ne Gönderilen 21 Kasım 1911 Tarihli Tahrirat. (Official letter dated 21 November 1911 sent from Cavalry Bureau of The Ministry of War to the Ministry of Interior).

35 *BOA, DH.SYS.*, 24/2-3, Lef 33-35. Erzurum Vilayeti'nden Dahiliye Nezareti'ne Gönderilen 6 Aralık 1911 Tarihli Şifre. (Code dated 6 December 1911 sent from Erzurum Province to the Ministry of Interior).



The Tribe Troops, which were kept out of staff, were destitute of whole privileges they used to have. They protested the government by arranging various meetings. The government authorities were worried seriously as this attitude had been manifested by the tribes near to the Russian border<sup>36</sup>. In order to wipe the reactions intensified among the tribes at Karakilise, Van, Bitlis, Erciş and Beyazıt regions, influential local religious authorities were made use of by the government in order to have these tribes advised by them.

Although the Party of Union and Progress, as it promised, reordered the Hamidiye Troops after the proclamation of the Ottoman parliamentary system; it could neither please the troops nor the Armenians who has been viewing the Tribe Troops as an element of threat against themselves and has been working for a long time to make them wiped. The troops' reformation issue lengthened till the years after the proclamation of the Ottoman parliamentary system. At years, when the Armenian terror associations fronted against the Party of Union and Progress apparently and Russian threat grew up gradually, it is possible to say that the Party of Union and Progress, who realized the seriousness of the threat, could not wipe the troops out as a whole and delayed their disintegration. How much adequate this attitude was can be seen apparently when attention paid on the role of tribe troops while they were defending the country during the First World War.

### III. THE PROPAGANDA AGAINST THE PROCLAMATION OF THE OTTOMAN PARLIAMENTARY SYSTEM WITHIN THE REGION

Armenians, who tried to abuse liberty, justice and equity slogans that became popular after the proclamation of the Ottoman parliamentary system, had played the role of a privileged class within the Ottoman Empire. They started to demand that the equity principle of the Ottoman parliamentary administration should have been applied as soon as possible; Armenian officers should have been employed within governmental bureaus of Eastern provinces, murder and smuggling criminals should have been delivered to justice and judged justly, tribe chiefs and landowners should have been prevented from exhibiting attitudes that would offence villagers' proud, Hamidiye troops' members should not have been allowed to walk with their guns at villages and towns and conversion to Islam (*ihtida*) events should have been blocked. Armenians, who complaint about the local of-

36 BOA, DH.SYS., 24/2-3, Lef 37-38. Erzurum Vilayeti'nden Dahiliye Nezareti'ne Gönderilen 16 Aralık 1911 Tarihli Şifre. (Code dated 16 December 1911 sent from Erzurum Province to the Ministry of Interior).

ficers who were not pro-Armenian, not only pressed on the government regarding the issue of appointment of such people to other regions but also, , wanted to have the tribes loyal to the government deported. In order to get revenge of the past, they were trying to show the slightest activity of both government and tribes at Eastern Anatolia as if it had been a plot organized against them. Also the Party of Union and Progress shrank so much from the grievances of the Armenians that it interpreted any unpleasantness occurred at Eastern provinces as “*game of sinister Armenians who try to invent complaints against the Kurds*”.

The Armenians, who achieved psychological primacy at Eastern provinces after the proclamation of the Ottoman parliamentary system when compared to the Kurds, initiated a war of propaganda against the Kurdish religious authorities and notables. By showing the Kurds as if they had been the enemies of the Ottoman parliamentary system and criminal from state's point of view, they tried to train inhabitants by governmental means and wipe obstacles on the way of independence by this way. It has been known that a significant opposition against the Party of Union and Progress starting from 1910s had been generated and that armed guerillas had emerged. From time to time, some of these groups tried to gather supporters through propaganda activities with the abuse of religion. These groups, which claimed that the government had been composed of atheists and masons, called the Kurds for an armed rebellion.

One of the names on the list of the Armenians, who made plot plans not only in order to get revenge from the ones that tried to prevent the activities of the Armenian committees at Abdülhamid era but also to have them removed from the region, was Şakir Ağa, the chief of *Giradi* tribe. His nephew, Mir Muhiy, founded a guerilla band by protesting the coalescence between the government and the Armenians after the proclamation of the Ottoman parliamentary system and ran up the rebellion flag with hostility and revenge feelings. Firstly, he had killed 7 people at around Nürdüz and martyred two gendarmeries and one officer by struggling with the detachment that had been forwarded to follow him up. By the aid of Russian and Iranian officers, he had robbed a caravan at around Hamidiye and Nürdüz, and slaughtered a Nestorian and an Armenian<sup>37</sup>. After this event, *Şitak* Armenians, by applying the government, demanded for punishment of Mir Muhiy and his fellows and for removal of Şakir Ağa from the region by claiming that he had helped and hid the guerillas<sup>38</sup>. The Armenians, by proposing that this was the requirement of the parliamentary governance, stated that all

37 BOA, DH.SYS., 7/2-1, Lef 91. Van Vilayeti'nden Dahiliye Nezareti'ne Gönderilen 24 Haziran 1910 Tarihli Şifre. (Code dated 24 June 1910 sent from Van Province to the Ministry of Interior).

38 BOA, DH.SYS., 7/2-1, Lef 103. Şitak Ahalisi Tarafından Sadarete Çekilen 12 Kasım 1910 Tarihli Telgraf. (Telegram dated 12 November 1910 sent by Şitak inhabitants to the Prime Ministry).

Armenians would emigrate if Şakir Ağa were not removed<sup>39</sup>. Şakir Ağa, who had worked against the activities of the Armenian committees on behalf of the state in Abdülhamid era and had maintained this devotion to the new regime founded after the proclamation of the Ottoman parliamentary system, was a powerful and respectful tribe chief. Moreover, he was guiding and helping the military detachments established for the elimination of the guerilla bands around Nurdüz and Şitak regions. For this reason, these demands of the Armenians were kept waiting for some time. However after a while, 30 people (headed by Ahtamar Cathogigos) from the Şitak Armenians came to Van and spotlighted that the Armenians were oppressed by Mir Muhiy and this situation generated disturbances at Şitak and, by proposing that Mir Muhiy was encouraged by Şakir Ağa, that Mir Muhiy should have been penalized. Upon these pressures, the government had to start judicial research about Şakir Ağa<sup>40</sup>. Mir Muhiy, who had learnt about these complaints of the Armenians, attacked Şitak and Nurdüz regions with his fellows. Since the gendarmerie power was not sufficient in the region, one group out of cavalry troops constituted by *Şeydan* tribe, by paying attention on its eternal hostility with Mir Muhiy, was armed<sup>41</sup>. Besides military arrangements, in order to prevent impetuosity of tribes at the region, Şeyh Mehmet Sıddık Efendi was employed to advice the tribes; as a result positive outcomes were achieved among the tribes<sup>42</sup>. Although military detachment had been activated, it had been ambushed by guerrilla bands at Zir River and its supplies and weapons had been seized by the guerrilla. While the Muslim officers within the military detachment were being set free, two private soldiers who was determined to be Armenian were released after being tortured<sup>43</sup>; this situation is important that it confirms that the main target of the guerrillas were the Armenians. The case has been concluded as Mir Muhiy's was murdered<sup>44</sup> by Kurt Bey (from his tribe) after some time.

Attitude of the Party of Union and Progress towards the Armenians had caused

39 *BOA, DH.SYS.*, 7/2-1, Lef 105. Şitak Ahalisinden Sadarete, Suretleri Meclis-i Ayan ve Meclis-i Mebusan Riyasetlerine Yazılan 3 Ocak 1911 Tarihli Telgraf Sureti. (Copy of the telegram dated 3 January 1911 written by Şitak inhabitants to the Prime Ministry, Meclis-i Ayan and Meclis-i Mebusan).

40 *BOA, DH.SYS.*, 7/2-1, Lef 136. Van Vilayeti'nden Dahiliye Nezareti'ne Gönderilen 22 Haziran 1911 Tarihli Telgraf. (Telegram dated 22 June 1911 sent from Van Province to the Ministry of Interior).

41 *BOA, DH.SYS.*, 7/2-1, Lef 29. Van Vilayeti'nden Dahiliye Nezareti'ne Gönderilen 8 Temmuz 1911 Tarihli Şifre. (Code dated 8 July 1911 sent from Van Province to the Ministry of Interior).

42 *BOA, DH.SYS.*, 7/2-1, Lef 24. Van Vilayeti'nden Dahiliye Nezareti'ne Gönderilen 8 Temmuz 1911 Tarihli Şifre. (Code dated 8 July 1911 sent from Van Province to the Ministry of Interior).

43 *BOA, DH.SYS.*, 7/2-1, Lef 19-21. Van Vilayeti'nden Dahiliye Nezareti'ne Gönderilen 26 Ağustos 1911 tarihli Şifre. (Code dated 26 August 1911 sent from Van Province to the Ministry of Interior).

44 Süleyman Sabri Paşa, *Van Tarihi ve Kürt Türkleri Hakkında İncelemeler*, prepared by Gamze Gayeöglü, (Ankara: 1982), p. 45.

some of the inhabitants of the region to oppose to the government. The estate cases played an important role for the deterioration of social relations at Eastern Anatolia.

Those, who were mistreated by the government's attitude regarding the estate trials, have started to hold activities against the Party of Union and Progress since 1910. One of these is Said, who is the son of Eyüphan from famous *Bedirhanlı* family. According to a letter written by him, it is understood that he was protesting the Party of Union and Progress government for collaborating with the Armenians and expressing that the liberty promised by the proclamation of the Ottoman parliamentary system was only for the Armenians. Said, who claimed that the partnership with the Christians on the Ottoman property was against Islamic laws (*şeriat*), and this was unacceptable for the Muslims; believed that he had no option other than an armed rebellion. The most efficient method, in order to make the tribes rebel, was abuse of religious feelings. Those distributed declarations have deepened the mistrust among the Eastern tribes, which had strong religious feelings, towards the government. Said, in order to be able to pass Iran when necessary and have the support of the Iranian and Russian authorities, has held intensive campaigns against the Ottoman cavalry troops at around province Van. One of his fellows caught had a letter with him and Said writes there "...a telegram reached us ordering the pronouncement of the names of Enver and Niyazi in place of the rightly guarded caliphs. The people refused it. For now, silence..."<sup>45</sup> The possibility of the calls, welcomed by *Haydaranlı*, *Takori*, *Şemsiki* and *Hasenanlı* tribes, to cause a Kurdish rebellion has worried the government. Military precautions were adopted in Mahmudi province, where the threat of rebellion was the case. It was taken care of that the troops which would be directed against Said were chosen not among the Kurds, which respected Said. It was principally decided that the some polices, who were unknown to the people and who dressed accordingly, should have been employed, legal research about the ones that helped and hid Said should have been held, and that those tribes who did not support this rebellion should have been rewarded<sup>46</sup>. Although the government spotlighted its mercy, Said, who viewed most of the judges and officers as Armenian supporters, did not surrender<sup>47</sup>. Said's reaction against the Armenians increased when he learnt that they damaged his fields, goods and

45 *BOA, DH.SYS.*, 24/2-4, Lef 114/1-2. Erzurum Vilayeti'nden Dahiliye Nezareti'ne Gönderilen 19 Mart 1911 Tarihli Tahrirat. (Official letter dated 19 March 1911 sent from Erzurum Province to the Ministry of Interior).

46 *BOA, DH.SYS.*, 7/2-1, Lef 80-84. Van Vilayeti'nden Dahiliye Nezareti'ne Gönderilen 20 Mart 1911 Tarihli Şifre. (Code dated 20 March 1911 sent from Van Province to the Ministry of Interior).

47 *BOA, DH.SYS.*, 7/2-3, Lef 104-105. Said'in Mektubunun Sureti. (Copy Of Said's Letter).

properties. When he realized that he was not able to punish the Armenians via the government, he tended towards the Armenian authorities. In his letter of complaint to the Van Armenian Delegation Assembly, he threatened by expressing that he would kill one Armenian for each of his fields if they went on performing in same way<sup>48</sup>.

The delegation, which principally used to use these kinds of cases as trump, by declaring the case to the patriarchate, proposed that the Armenians had been attacked by the Kurds, the churches had been fired and the metropolit had been assassinated. It demanded from the government to stop the Kurdish oppression<sup>49</sup>. Said's attitude towards the Armenians was also announced by the Petersburg Telegram Agency and the Kurdish oppression on the Armenians was declared to the world public opinion<sup>50</sup>. The claims regarding the murder of the metropolit and the firing of the churches have been realized to be untrue by the research of the Ministry of Interior<sup>51</sup>. Said, who escaped to the Iranian lands as a result of the government's military precautions, by accepting the protection of Bedirhanlı Abdürrezzak, who dreamed of founding a Kurdish state by the support of Russians, was made use of against the Ottoman Armenians by the Russian councils and the secret agents<sup>52</sup>.

Bedirhanlı Abdürrezzak had been involved in the murder of former mayor Rıdvan Paşa before the proclamation of the Ottoman parliamentary system and had been exiled to Tripoli. Although he had been forgiven after the proclamation of the Ottoman parliamentary system, he started to oppose the Party of Union and Progress after some time. At that time, he had escaped to Russia by the help of Russian envoy and, as a result of Russian instructions; he had started activities at South Azerbaijan regions inhabited by the Kurds. Abdurrezzak, who said "*Know that, by the abandonment of an Islamic state against which cruel operations are observed, being sheltered by another state, even if it is not Islamic, is agreeable according to the Islamic law*"<sup>53</sup> and blamed the ones governing the Ottoman state

48 BOA, DH.SYS., 7/2-1, Lef 142. Eyüphanbeyzade Said Tarafından Van Murahhasahane Meclisi'ne Gönderilen 13 Eylül 1911 Tarihli Mektup Sureti. (Copy of the latter dated 13 September 1911 sent by Eyüphanzade Said To the Van Armenian Delegation Assembly).

49 BOA, DH.SYS., 7/2-1, Lef 141. Ermeni Patrikhanesi'nden Adliye ve Mezahip Nezareti'ne Gönderilen 16 Eylül 1911 Tarihli Tahrirat. (Official letter dated 16 September 1911 sent from the Armanian Patriarchate to the Ministry of Justice and Religious Sects).

50 BOA, DH.SYS., 7/2-2, Lef 92.

51 BOA, DH.SYS., 7/2-2, Lef 92.

52 BOA, DH.SYS., 24/2-3, Lef 68. Van Vilayeti'nden Dahiliye Nezareti'ne Gönderilen 17 Şubat 1912 Tarihli Şifre. (Code dated 17 February 1912 sent from Van Province to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs).

53 BOA, DH.SYS., 24/2-4, Lef 113. Van Vilayeti'nden Dahiliye Nezareti'ne Gönderilen 22 Nisan 1912 Tarihli

for being atheist and infidel, was inviting the Kurdish landowners and tribe chiefs to “*struggle against the infidel representatives, who had betrayed Islam, by their wares and souls*”. He was attracting those who opposed the Party of Union and Progress by the aid of his religious speeches. He used these groups, which he had organized together with the Russian consuls, against the Ottoman state. Çerkov, the consul of Hoy, encouraged the Kurdish rebels under his protection to invade the villages by stating that “*On the Ottoman territory, kill the Armenian, Muslim, Nestorian, officer, official, whoever he is and fire and destroy. Only by this way can the Kurdish state emerge*”<sup>54</sup>. To conclude, Said had been used by the Russians until he was murdered by one of his fellows at 1914 summer.

#### **d. The Precautions Taken by the Government**

Among the governmental precautions for the prevention of the propaganda against Party of Union and Progress advisory commissions have the priority. This time, the government had replied the tribes and the people with some activities that would satisfy their religious feelings. Effective commissions had been established in order to advice the regions with intensive propagandas and the tribes whose disobedience was experienced. Most of the ones selected for these commissions had important roles in the social life of the inhabitants of Eastern Anatolia. Nakşibendi sheiks, because of their popularity among the Kurds, were being assigned. These people were extremely respected within the community. By paying attention on the conditions of the period, the advices of these commissions were about following issues:

- To encourage the Kurds for worship.
- Not to violate the rights of the others and refrain from lying.
- To pay attention on marriage and divorcement issues.
- To obey the government.
- To remove the hostilities between the tribes and the non-Muslim inhabitants of the region
- Not to pay attention to the external provocations and inducements.
- To inform about the necessity regarding Islamic manner of respecting the rights of non-Muslim neighbors and citizens and the importance of taking care of their rights more than theirs.
- To enlighten the community about the divine origin of the Ottoman parlia-

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Arz. (The official demand dated 22 April 1912 sent from Van Province to the Ministry of Interior).

54 BOA, BEO., 322594. Van Vilayeri'nden Dahiliye Nezareti'ne Gönderilen 6 Temmuz 1914 Tarihli Şifre. (The Code dated 6 July 1914 sent from Van Province to The Ministry of Interior).

mentary system and its legitimacy and its being the guarantor of the national progress<sup>55</sup>.

Besides religious duties, also the advices regarding the reconciliation among the non-Muslims and the respect to the reciprocal rights were quite significant. It had been targeted to remove the sufferings of the community by the advices in accordance with that the Ottoman parliamentary system was not against Islam, in fact, it was a requirement of Islam. Telling the preachers forwarded to the tribes to preach in accordance with increasing tribes' devotion to the government and to get on well especially with the Armenians are among the persistently highlighted issues<sup>56</sup>.

It had been concluded that military precautions at Eastern provinces should have been increased, the police stations should have been established at critical locations and they should have become widespread, the committees should have been forwarded to the regions for the solution of the unconcluded estate trials, the officials that would be appointed to the Eastern provinces should have been selected from those knowing about the local structure and attention should have been paid on administering non-Muslim citizens with equality and the operations regarding the regulation and the reformation of the Tribe Troops that caused the Armenian complaints should have been implemented. Furthermore, in order to avoid girls' kidnapping, which resulted in Armenian complaints, it had been decided to increase the legal penalty of this crime. In order to avoid religion conversion trials, at least in order to avoid the Armenians complaints about this issue, conversion age was raised to 20 from 15 and for the Armenians, who chose Islam, in order to have the conversion operation realized, the requirement to have their identity cards and domicile documents with them had been necessitated<sup>57</sup>.

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55 *BOA, DH.SYS.*, 24/2-4, Lef 61. Kürtlere nasihat etmesi için görevlendirilen Şeyh Hacı Mehmet Efendi'ye takdim edilen program. (Program presented to Sheikh Hacı Mehmet Efendi, who was assigned to advice the Kurds).

56 *BOA, DH.SYS.*, 23-12, Lef 2. Erzurum Vilayeti'nden Dahiliye Nezareti'ne Gönderilen 10 Haziran 1913 Tarihli Şifre. (Code dated 10 June 1912 sent from Van Province to the Ministry of Interior). Among the sheikhs of Nakşibendiye/Halidi tribe, which was respected by Kurds, Sheikh Hacı Yusuf Efendi from Muş, had been forwarded to the Hınıs and Pasinler region.

57 Ahmet Halaçoğlu, "Türk-Ermeni İlişkilerinin Genel Değerlendirmesi ve Ermeni Şikayetleri Hakkında Bir Belge", (*Yeni Türkiye, Ermeni Sorunu Özel Sayısı I*, No. 37, Ocak-Şubat 2001, p.449-454).

#### IV. THE REACTIONS AGAINST THE OTTOMAN PARLIAMENTARY SYSTEM – THE ARMENIAN REFORMATION – THE REBELLIONS

The Ottoman parliamentary system's loss of large territories during the Tripoli and Balkan Wars has encouraged the independence movements of some elements of the Ottoman society. The separatist activities, which have been executed secretly by the components that seemed to be devoted to being Ottoman up to that time, started to surface. For the first time, the Tashnaks, within their newspapers, started to provoke the Armenian soldiers at the Ottoman army for deserting the army. The Hınçak Congress, met at Constanta, mentioned within their protocol that the Party of Union and Progress administration had not been so much different from the previous Ottoman administration and the party had been protecting the Turkish bureaucracy<sup>58</sup>. The Armenian associations, by taking the Balkan Wars as opportunity, has united by leaving the disputes among them aside and forwarded committees, by inventing the problem of Eastern provinces reformation, to the European centers<sup>59</sup>. Upon the unexpected defeat of the Ottoman armies at the Balkan War, the armistice was signed on 3 December 1912 and the Conference of Ambassadors was convened in London on 17 December as for making the preparatory work of the prospective peace treaty. In accordance with the resolution adopted by the Armenians at the conference in Tbilisi on 7 October 1912, Bogos Nubar Paşa, who worked for the Armenians' independence, has carried the Armenian reformation to international level by participating in the Conference of the Ambassadors met in London on 17 December 1912<sup>60</sup>.

The idea of retrieving independence and of being separated from the Ottoman state was much stronger than any time before. The Armenians, on the one hand, was attracting the attention of the Western states towards this way and, on the other, believed that Russia would come soon and occupy Van, Bitlis and Erzurum. In order to accelerate this, they were in pursuit of organizing rebellions that would set the background for such an intervention. For this purpose, they were working in order to be able to make the Kurds attack on them. Conservative and religious segments, as they did not trust the Party of Union and Progress government that they have always viewed suspiciously, has started to be clamped together around the powerful authorities of the region as a result of the Armenian effusiveness and the Russian threat. Within the report, dated 24 December

58 Parmaksız, *op.cit.*, p .51.

59 *Ibid.*, p .56.

60 Ercüment Kuran, "Ermeni Meselesinin Milletlerarası Boyutu", *Osmanlı'dan Günümüze Ermeni Sorunu*, (Ankara: 2001), p.116.



1912, forwarded by the Russian consul in Bitlis to the Russian ambassador in Istanbul, it has been expressed that “*As the disturbance among the Muslims are growing, the Armenians are busy with planning to share the properties and estates of the Muslims that will leave the region after the Russian occupation*”<sup>61</sup>. The Tashnak Committee played a vital role at such activities of the Armenians. It was trying to generate conflicts between the Armenians and Muslims and, by making use of an event that was likely to happen at around Bitlis, which was one of the places in which the Armenian reactions against the system had intensified, would ensure the Russian intervention and the occupation of Russian forces. The Armenian Hınçak and Sahamanas Taragan committees have also intensified their preparations for a rebellion at Bitlis. They have started to organize small-scaled attacks on the Kurds by forming armed guerillas. These committees were forcing the inhabitants for changing their nationalities. Hundreds of nationality conversion applications with seals and signatures, organized by the committees via justifying that they were subject to the Kurdish cruelty, to the Russian Consulate in Bitlis took place<sup>62</sup>.

In 1913, when the Armenian reformation case constituted one of the most vital current agenda items of the international bureaucracy, the Western states, on the one hand, and Russia, on the other, have started to submit reformation projects. The reformation arguments were prolonged as a result of the German intervention, besides Russia and Britain, in accordance with its own interests. As a result, the reflection of the reformation proposals, which were negotiated among these states, has gradually increased the tensions against the government at the Eastern provinces.

On 30 June 1913, as a result of Russian suggestion and the positive attitude of France, a Conference of Ambassadors was convened in order to negotiate the Eastern Anatolian reformation. The reform proposal was prepared by the chief translator of the Russian Embassy, Mandelstam, as “*based upon 1895 Armenian reformation and 1880 Draft Laws on the European Provinces of the Empire*”. The Ottoman government also submitted its own reform proposal to the commission. Eastern Anatolian Reformation Commission, which met again on 3 July 1913, decided the Russian project to be adopted. As an outcome of the German representative’s intervention, an agreement could not be achieved. On 23 September 1913, as a result of the German and Russian representatives’ agreement, a common project of reformation was agreed on. According to this agreement,

61 Parmaksız, *op.cit.*, p.59.

62 *Ibid.*, p. 60-61.

Eastern Anatolian provinces would be divided into two segments; among those who were advised by the Great Powers a general inspector would be appointed by the Ottoman government for five years; the judges and officials appointed by them would be submitted to the approval of the Sultan; an assembly to be constituted by Muslim and non-Muslim members with equal number of representatives would be established and the Great Powers would be given the right to inspect the reformation process<sup>63</sup>. Within the framework of these principals, Russian and German ambassadors started to negotiate with the Ottoman government. Although, by objecting to the project, the Ottoman government searched for the support of the England and France, it could not obtain a satisfying reply from these countries that recognized the Russian-German project. The Ottoman government approved this project on 8 February with some slight changes at the end. Furthermore, disintegration of the Hamidiye troops, usage of local languages and the proportional election of the members (*nisbi aza*) for the administrative assemblies were included within the accepted reformations<sup>64</sup>.

These processes meant for the Muslims in the Ottoman Empire an opportunity for the Armenians to establish their own independent states. Hostility and hatred, evolved against the Party of Union and Progress, reached its peak. These developments, which happened to be intolerable for the Muslim Kurdish community, have activated the Russian Consulate that was looking forward to start the Kurdish-Armenian conflict. The consul, by suggesting that the Ottoman government tolerated the Armenians and neglected the Muslims, has induced the Kurds to rebel<sup>65</sup>. Actually, the target of the Russians was not making the Armenians achieve their independence but reaching the Mediterranean Sea over Alexandria Gulf by dominating the region. Even though the regions inhabited by the Armenians could not be made integrated directly to Russia, an autonomous Armenia, which would be founded by the Russian power, would make Russian ambitions much easier to be achieved. According to the German ambassador in Istanbul, the country, which caused the Armenian demands to grow, was Russia<sup>66</sup>. The politics of Russia, since 1910, was really within this framework. The most apparent proof of this was that, on one hand, Russia encouraged the Armenians to achieve their independence, whereas on the other hand, she promised Kurdish rebels for establishing Kurdistan. Actually, Russians concerned neither Armenians nor Kurds in a real sense. It was "*Armenia without the Armenians*" desire and proposal of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Prince Labonovrostovski, which was summarizing whole Russian effort<sup>67</sup>.

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63 Yusuf Hikmet Bayur, *Türk İnkılabı Tarihi*, Vol. II, (Ankara: 1983), pp. 145-146.

64 Akdes Nimet Kurat, *Türkiye ve Rusya*, (Ankara: 1990), p. 208-209.

65 *Halil Mentеше'nin Anıları*, (İstanbul: 1986), p.176.

66 Y.H.Bayur, *op.cit.*, p. 98.

67 Kuran, *op. cit.*, p.116.

## V. BITLIS REBELLION / MOLLA SELIM REBELLION

The most serious reaction against the developments after the proclamation of the Ottoman parliamentary system and especially against the Armenian reformation was from Bitlis and its environs, the regions in which religion and tribes were the most effective. The gradually increasing anxiety and hostility among the Muslim community, which we mentioned above, has activated Molla Selim who had power at the center of Bitlis and at Hizan.

Molla Selim, who contacted tribe chiefs, landowners and religious authorities, by coming to Istanbul at 1913, when the Armenian reformation was experiencing its most intense times within the international diplomacy, had closely followed the developments at governmental center. He turned back to Bitlis after he had made long lasted negotiations in Istanbul with the son of Ubeydullah, (who was a powerful sheikh at Hakkari and around) Seyyid Abdulkadir, who was also among the prominent notables among the Kurds who opposed the Party of Union and Progress<sup>68</sup>. Although he had applied Said Nursi, who was in Istanbul at these times, and asked for help, he was not replied positively. Said Nursi told about this demand in his work *Şualar* later on as: “*Just before the World War I, when I was in Van, some religious and faithful people came and told that, “some commanders are atheist, come and accompany us, we will rebel against these chiefs”. I also said that, “their atheism and atrocities are for themselves; the army cannot be accounted by this. This Ottoman army has, may be, a hundred thousand of Muslim saints. I do not use my sword against this army and I don’t join you”.*

Sheikh Selim has been supported by some tribes especially from centre of Bitlis and from Hizan. Although the tribes of the province of Van had been called by the other leaders of the rebellion, Seyyid Ali<sup>69</sup>, his brother Sheikh Şehabettin and the other sheikhs, full participation could not been achieved<sup>70</sup>.

Some researchers have claimed that the Armenians also participated in the rebel. There are existing allegations regarding that Molla Selim had established close

68 BOA, *DH.Kalem-i Mahsus* (KMS), 16/30, Lef 3. Van Vilayeti’nden Dahiliye Nezareti’ne Gönderilen 18 Mart 1914 Tarihli Tahrirat. (Official letter dated 18 March 1914 sent from Van Province to the Ministry of Interior).

69 It is known that Seyyid Ali was the father of Selahaddin Inan (Member of Parliament from the Democrat Party) and the grandfather of Kamuran Inan. See, Naci Kutlay, *İttihat Terakki ve Kürtler*, (Ankara: 1992), p.169-170.

70 BOA, *DH.KMS.*, 16/30, Lef 3. Van Vilayeti’nden Dahiliye Nezareti’ne Gönderilen 18 Mart 1914 Tarihli Tahrirat. (Official letter dated 18 March 1914 sent from Van Province to the Ministry of Interior).

relations in 1913 with the prominent representatives of the Armenian movement, even applied the Armenian patriarch by a letter and informed about “*the rebels were only against the Young Turks*” and that he had wanted the Armenians to support the rebellion. It was also argued that the Armenians had supported the Kurds at the rebellion<sup>71</sup>. It is proposed that only Seyyid Ali had accepted the partnership of the Armenians and the Kurds during the rebellion preparations, requested the Tashnaks to have a negotiation and forwarded Molla Selim to the Surp Garabet monastery near Muş. Accordingly, Molla Selim had negotiated with the priest Vartan Vartabet, who was the member of the Daron Tashnak Central Committee, and the Kurdish-Armenian partnership had been realized<sup>72</sup>.

These preparations of the Kurds, which had evolved against the government, were being closely followed by the authorities. Local administrators sent an advisory commission constituted by the clergies and notables to Molla Selim in order to convince him by giving him some privileges<sup>73</sup>. On the other hand, it had not been neglected to take military precautions<sup>74</sup>. In spite of the precautions taken, the rebellion erupted, which was headed by Molla Selim, Seyyid Ali and Sheikh Şehabettin, had been oppressed in a short time due to the readiness of the military forces and thanks to their immediate action. Although the rebels had managed to occupy some part of Bitlis, the rebellion was oppressed in a short time as a result of the arrival military forces at the city.

It has been known that the Armenians supported the Ottoman army against the rebels during Bitlis rebellion. The Azadamart newspaper has written that<sup>75</sup>: *During the first Kurdish attack to Bitlis, several Armenian soldiers went forward by saying “we are the bodyguards and will stand at the front”. Upon one Turkish sergeant’s following them, the condition strengthened the morale of the soldiers and they protected this bodyguard detachment against the two sides of the butchers till the end and four Armenian soldiers were killed during the conflict.*

Some of the researchers claim that a volunteer Armenian group was organized

71 Celile Celil, *XIX. Yüzyıl Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda Kürtler*, Transl. Mehmet Demir, (Ankara: 1992), p.201-214.

72 Garo Sasuni, *op.cit.*, p.156-157. About that the Kurds and the Armenians have acted together at the rebellion, see, Vedat Şadillili, *Türkiyede Kürtçülük Hareketleri ve İsyanları I*, (Ankara: 1980), p. 35.

73 *BOA, DH.KMS.*, 16/30, Lef 4. Van Vilayeti’nden Dahiliye Nezareti’ne Gönderilen 19 Mart 1914 Tarihli Tahrirat. (Official letter dated 18 March 1914 sent from Van Province to the Ministry of Interior).

74 *BOA, DH. Şifre (ŞFR)*, 39/7. Dahiliye Nezareti’nden Bitlis Vilayeti’ne Gönderilen 14 Mart 1914 Tarihli Tahrirat. (Official letter dated 18 March 1914 sent from Van Province to the Ministry of Interior).

75 *BOA, DH.ŞFR.*, 20/104. Dahiliye Nezareti’nden Bitlis Vilayeti’ne Gönderilen 28 Nisan 1914 Tarihli Şifre. (Code dated 28 April 1914 sent from the Ministry of Interior to the Bitlis Province).

during the rebellion and that, by making use of the rebellion, these took their revenges from the ones that had tortured the Armenians<sup>76</sup>; and also that İhsan Paşa, who had been appointed for suppressing the rebellion, applied Muş Armenian leader and demanded for an organization of an armed detachment in order to participate in the incursion against the Kurds<sup>77</sup>.

After the rebellion had been suppressed, some of the rebels, who escaped to the outside of the city by groups, were taken under the military pursuance whereas some others was caught and executed by martial courts (*Divan-ı Harp*) constituted in Bitlis. The execution of Seyyid Ali, who was liked and respected by the community, has caused agitation among the community and this tension was kept for a long time after the execution<sup>78</sup>. Some of the rebels, whose crimes had been approved, were exiled to Medina and, by allocating them a reasonable amount of daily allowance, the Medina Protectorate was notified to take care of their protection<sup>79</sup>. After the rebellion had been suppressed, the government unseated some state officials, who abused their tasks; and tried to warm Kurds' hearts up towards the government via money and various gifts<sup>80</sup>. The notables of the region, who supported the military forces by not failing to be devoted to the government during the suppression of the rebellion, were complimented by various marks and gifts<sup>81</sup>. The chief of the rebellion, Molla Selim, has sheltered the Russian consulate. The government tried hard in order to take Molla Selim back from the Russian consulate. It had requested legal investigations regarding that whether he had participated in the Armenian case, murdered someone or involved in seizure by violence<sup>82</sup>. Gossips regarding that Molla Selim deserted from

76 Garo Sasuni, *op. cit.*, p.158.

77 Celile Celil, *op. cit.*, p.208.

78 *BOA, DH, ŞFR.*, 42/194. Dahiliye Nezareti'nden Bitlis Vilayeti'ne Gönderilen 5 Temmuz 1914 Tarihli Şifre. (Code dated 5 July 1914 sent from the Ministry of Interior to the Bitlis Province). The mournings on the name of Seyyid Ali and Sheikh Şehabettin has been released at Roja Nu, the newspaper published in 1943 at Beirut. See, Naci Kutlay, *op. cit.*, p.164.

79 *BOA, DH.ŞFR.*, 42/102. Dahiliye Nezareti'nden Medine Muhafızlığı'na Gönderilen 22 Haziran 1914 Tarihli Şifre. (Code dated 22 Haziran 1914 sent from the Ministry of Interior to the Medina Protectorate). As well as the rebels, who deserted at the beginning of the First World War because of their affiliation to the rebellion, was caught up and forwarded to the war, the criminals and the disinterested ones at Medina, Sivas, Ankara, Bitlis and other places were forgiven by thinking that this would effect the Islamic body positively. See., *BOA, BEO.*, 324157. Dahiliye Nezareti'nden Sadarete Gönderilen 10 Kasım 1914 Tarihli Tahrirat; *BOA, DH.ŞFR.*, 47/190.

80 *BOA, DH.KMS.*, 19/27, Lef2. Van Vilayeti'nden Dahiliye Nezareti'ne Gönderilen 1 Nisan 1914 Tarihli Tahrirat. (Official letter dated 1 April 1914 sent from Van Province to the Ministry of Interior).

81 *BOA, DH.KMS.*, 21/55, Lef 3/1. Hasan Fehmi Tarafından Bitlis Vilayeti'ne Çekilen 16 Mayıs 1914 Tarihli Telgraf. (Telegram dated 16 May 1914 sent by Hasan Fehmi to the Bitlis Province).

82 *BOA, DH.ŞFR.*, 40/18. Dahiliye Nezareti'nden Bitlis Vilayeti'ne Gönderilen 16 Nisan 1914 Tarihli Tahrirat (Official letter dated 16 April 1914 sent from the Ministry of Interior to Bitlis Province).

the consulate had been circulated. However, Molla Selim could not be taken back despite whole efforts<sup>83</sup>.

Molla Selim's sheltering in the Russian Consulate showed that Russia had a role in the emergence of the rebellion. Indeed, it has been known that Russia was trying to generate chaos and rebellions by provoking the Kurds and the Armenians at Eastern Anatolia since 1912. This attitude of the Russians, which became apparent by this rebellion, found repercussions all over the world. At this period, the perception (dominating within the European public opinion) that the Kurds tortured the Armenians and the Ottoman state behaved yielding regarding the Armenian reformation issue has started to get lost. The *Svenska Dagbladet* bulletin, which was published in Stockholm just after the rebellion and known for its Ottoman opposition, must have reflected the regional reality of the Swedish general inspector appointed to the region on its government because it wrote as "Ottoman state aims to reform the Kurds, who are used to live lawlessly and Russia tries to prevent this"<sup>84</sup>.

The reflection of the Kurdish rebellion at Bitlis on the Turkish and world public opinion has benefited the Armenians so much at this period. The Armenians, by reactivating, has gone on with their complaints regarding that they had been subjected to the Kurdish cruelty<sup>85</sup>. However, the rebellion protected its characteristic of being carried to political platforms. Indeed, it had been brought in front of the Turkish representatives while Musul issue was being negotiated at Lausanne. Lord Curzon had pointed out to Bitlis rebellion as an indicator of that the Kurds were not happy with Turkish administration<sup>86</sup>.

83 *BOA, DH.ŞFR.*, 40/78. Dahiliye Nezareti'nden Bitlis Vilayeti'ne Gönderilen 23 Nisan 1914 Tarihli Tahrirat. (Official letter dated 23 April 1914 sent from the Ministry of Interior to Bitlis Province) It is expressed that Molla Selim was executed by being taken back from the Russian consulate and told the following to Duran Bey, who would be the member of parliament representing Erzurum later "...Turks! Execute me if you will. However, are not you ashamed of the administration within your state? You have given this much places, you have donated so much places to this and that. You know how to administrate at the time. You do not tell that we are defective with this. What is its disadvantage? What happens in case of you give Bitlis to us?". Hasan Yıldız, *Sevr-Lozan-Musul Üçgeninde Kürdistan*, Koral Yayınları, (İstanbul: 1991), p.139-140.

84 *BOA, DH.KMS.*, 3/35, Lef 19. Stockholm Sefaret-i Seniyyesinden Hariciye Nezareti'ne Gönderilen 7 Nisan 1914 Tarihli Suret. (Copy dated 7 April 1914 sent from Stockholm Embassy to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs).

85 *BOA, DH.ŞFR.*, 40/121. Dahiliye Nezareti'nden Bitlis Vilayeti'ne Gönderilen 30 Nisan 1914 Tarihli Şifre. (Code dated 30 April 1914 sent from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to Bitlis Province).

86 Hasan Yıldız, *op.cit.*, pp.138-139.

## CONCLUSION

Within the works regarding the Armenian question; while the emergence of this problem, its abuse by the foreign states, activities of the Armenian committees and the rebellions they had initiated were not mentioned, the international community focused on the relocation. When the Armenian question is viewed as a whole, it can be seen that the attitude of the Party of Union and Progress towards the Armenians and the Armenian question before and after the first years of the proclamation of the Ottoman parliamentary system is eventually different from its attitude at the years at which the World War I started; and the reasons caused the relocation were significant. For a better understanding of the attitude of the Armenians at the process during which their disloyalty (which resulted in relocation) against the Ottoman state was at peak, the proclamation of the Ottoman parliamentary system years, expectations of the non-Muslims in general and that of the Armenians in particular, their preparations for independence, the political maneuvers of the Party of Union and Progress up to and before the Balkan wars and the years between 1912-1914 during which the fate of East Anatolia was determined has to be investigated well. The union of components (*ittihad-ı anasır*), which were seen as a salvation recipe together with the proclamation of the Ottoman parliamentary system, had been realized to be a utopia in a short time and it has been known that it had been persistently pursued by the Party of Union and Progress because of the non-existence of another option. This is why the government provided the non-Muslim components, which had a strong desire for independence, with privileges beyond the equality.

The proclamation of the Ottoman parliamentary system had been viewed as the incorporation of the Armenians within the state governance and preparations for the independent Armenia in following years by the Muslim inhabitants of Eastern Anatolia, when the Armenian reformation gained an international dimension. The attempts of the Armenians in order to wipe the obstacles on the way to the independence of the Armenians and to the transformation of Eastern provinces into an Armenian country had caused the Muslim inhabitants' reactions. The attempts of Russia, which made the Straits and Eastern provinces as targets of its external policy, to use the Armenians and some part of the unpleasant Kurds as a tool in order to realize these targets, raised the tension at Eastern Anatolia. Bitlis rebellion raised by the Kurds and the rebellions, which were raised by the Armenians at the beginning of the First World War in various parts of Anatolia, are the outcomes of this tension.

# ESTABLISHMENT AND ACTIVITIES OF THE FRENCH LEGION D'ORIENT (EASTERN LEGION) IN THE LIGHT OF FRENCH ARCHIVAL DOCUMENTS

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## **Abstract:**

Being rarely examined in detail, the French Legion d'Orient, composed mainly of the Armenians either fleeing from the Ottoman Empire or those who had already been living in France, has been one of the most significant troops served in the Middle East during and after the First World War. Established in 1915, these troops were one of the bloodiest units of the war, which had stormed the Çukurova region after the Armistice of Mudros. This article aims to examine the establishment and activities of this legion in the light of French archival documents. In doing that, rather than making mere speculations based on oral evidence, authentic documents will be referred in order to provide the reader with the exact knowledge of what happened in reality. The article started with the roots of French-Armenian relations since late nineteenth centuries and then analyzed the process of establishment of Eastern legion up until November 1916. The activities of the Eastern legion during and after First World War will be the subject of subsequent articles.

**Key Words:** Legion d'Orient, French-Armenian Relations, Armenian Question, Revolutionary Armenian Committees

## **Öz:**

Literatürde nadiren detaylı bir biçimde incelenen, Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'ndan kaçan veya halihazırda Fransa'da yaşamakta olan Ermenilerden oluşturulan Fransız Doğu Lejyonu, Birinci Dünya Savaşı sırasında ve sonrasında Ortadoğu'da görev yapan en önemli birliklerden biridir. 1915 yılında kurulan bu birlikler özellikle Mondros Ateşkes Antlaşması'ndan sonra Çukurova bölgesini tarumar eden, savaşın en kanlı birliklerinden birisidir. Bu makalenin amacı da Fransız arşiv belgelerine dayanarak bu lejyonun kuruluşunu ve faaliyetlerini incelemektir. Bunu yaparken, sözlü tarihe dayalı spekülatif bir yöntem kullanmak yerine gerçekte ne



olduđunu tam olarak açıklayabilmek için gerek arşiv belgelerine müracaat edilecektir. Makale ondokuzuncu yüzyılın son döneminden itibaren Fransız-Ermeni ilişkileri üzerinde yoğunlaştıktan sonra Kasım 1916'ya kadar Dođu Lejyonu'nun kuruluş sürecini analiz edecektir. Bu lejyonun Birinci Dünya savaşı sırasında ve sonrasındaki faaliyetleri bu makaleyi takip eden bir dizi makalenin konusu olacaktır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Dođu Lejyonu, Fransız-Ermeni ilişkileri, Ermeni sorunu, Devrimci Ermeni Komiteleri

## INTRODUCTION

Either labeling the 1915-16 events as genocide or perceiving them as the relocation of a disloyal community, the literature on the Armenian question has a significant common argument: the impact of foreign intervention on the Ottoman Empire and its implications on the inter-communal relations between the Turkish and Armenian subjects of the Empire. Particularly, during the nineteenth century foreign intervention reached its epitome. Earlier, it was started with the interference of the diplomatic missions to the Ottoman bureaucracy. Even as early as late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries European diplomatic missions began to establish strong links with high-rank Ottoman officials in order to provide preferential treatment for their merchants<sup>1</sup>. Later, to these first interactions with economic purposes added judicial and religious matters. Accordingly, representatives of the European states tried to obtain imperial edicts labeling them as the 'protector' of several Christian groups. They began to interfere in the judicial matters and obtained several concessions and preferential judicial treatment for the Christian communities. By the nineteenth century, the issue of protection of the Christian communities turned out to be a fierce rivalry between three Great powers. On the one hand, France generally claimed itself as the protector of the Catholic Christian communities. Britain, on the other hand, aimed to be labeled as the protector of the Protestant community. Finally, the archenemy of the Ottoman Empire, Russia, declared itself as the protector of the Orthodox community, which was the most populous Christian community within the borders of the Ottoman Empire. This issue of protection even resulted in a war among the Great Powers in the mid nineteenth century. Fearing from

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1 For a detailed account of these earlier interventions, see M. Serdar Palabıyık, *Contributions of the Ottoman Empire to the Construction of Modern Europe*, Unpublished MA Thesis, (Ankara, 2005), available at the URL: [www.lib.metu.edu.tr](http://www.lib.metu.edu.tr)

the growing Russian influence in the Ottoman Empire, Britain and France sided with the Ottomans and defeated Russia in the Crimean War, which lasted between 1853 and 1856.

What is more significant was the situation of the Armenian community in these difficult times. Accordingly, a great majority of the Armenian population was Orthodox; thus, they were the potential targets of the Russian ambitions. However, by 1820s a significant Catholic Armenian community emerged due to the extensive works of Catholic missionaries in the Ottoman Empire. This community was so well established that in 1831 Sultan Mahmud II recognized this community and gave the permission to establish their own church in Istanbul. In this recognition, the pressure coming from the French ambassador in Istanbul was quite influential<sup>2</sup>. This was followed by Sultan Abdülmecid's recognition of the Protestant Armenian community that was established through the efforts of the Protestant missionaries, which were even more active than the Catholic ones. In 1846, Protestant Armenians established the Protestant Governing Board and obtained the permission to establish their own Church under the strong support of the British ambassador in the Ottoman Empire<sup>3</sup>. All these developments showed that Great Power intervention was a significant factor not only regarding the relations between different sects of Armenians; but also regarding the relations between the Armenian community and the Ottoman Empire.

Following this introduction, it should be mentioned that this paper is written to analyze the impact of Armenian-French connection on the Armenian question between 1883 and 1916. In doing that, in the first part of the paper, it is aimed to examine the establishment of Armenian revolutionary organizations in France and their connection with the French government. The second part, in other words the central part, of the paper, on the other hand deals with the establishment of Armenian troops within the French army during First World War. These troops, which were labeled as the *Legion d'Orient* (The Eastern Legion), were quite conspicuous, since they were trained by the French and sent to Cilicia during and after First World War. However, the activities of this Legion after 1916 and during the post-First World War era will be the theme of another paper, which will hopefully published in the next issue of this journal.

Due to the wideness of this field of research and to depict the French-Arme-

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2 Genelkurmay Askeri Tarih ve Stratejik Etüt Başkanlığı, a.g.e, s. 26

3 Justin McCarthy ve Caroline McCarthy, *Turks and Armenians: A Manual on the Armenian Question*, (Washington D.C.: Committee on Education, Assembly of Turkish American Associations, 1989), s. 31

nian connection more clearly, a chronological sequence will be followed. What is more, rather than summarizing the secondary literature on this topic, it is intended to use primary sources, namely documents from Ottoman and French archives. Therefore, the information and comments written in this paper are not the results of haphazard brainstorming; rather every argument is clearly documented. The author of this paper believes that only through such a methodology, the complexity of historical occurrences can be clarified.

### **I. ARMENIAN-FRENCH CONNECTION UNTIL THE FIRST WORLD WAR (1883-1914)**

As indicated in the introduction, French-Armenian connection had emerged as early as 1820s with the French support to the establishment of a Catholic Armenian Church in Istanbul. However, this connection was not only visible on the Ottoman realms; rather in France there began to emerge a significant Armenian community. Indeed, Armenian migration from Caucasus as well as from the Ottoman territories to France resulted in the establishment of small but a powerful Armenian community, particularly in Marseilles and Paris. Soon after the eruption of the Armenian question in the second half of the nineteenth century, this community became ardent opponents of the Ottoman Empire and they began to form some primitive committees to raise the European public opinion against the Ottoman Empire with the disinformation that argued the Ottomans had continuously persecuted the Christian population.

As archival documentation reveals, as early as 1883, Ottoman authorities began to hear some rumors on the existence and activities of several Armenian committees in Paris and asked this matter to the Ottoman Ambassador in Paris, Esad Paşa. The Ambassador replied that he had searched the conditions of the Armenian community in Paris and reached the conclusion that the Parisian Armenians were nothing but a few poor students and a few businessmen who were not inclined to political intrigues. However, still, he added that he would keep an eye on this community<sup>4</sup>.

Indeed, this reply was quite significant in showing the underestimation of the Ambassador. Having confirmed the validity of this intelligence, Ottoman

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4 From Esad Paşa, Ambassador of Ottoman Empire in Paris, to Ârifî Paşa, Ottoman Foreign Minister, BOA. HR. SYS. 2748/2, 1 November 1883, in *Osmanlı Belgelerinde Ermeni-Fransız İlişkileri (1879-1918)* (Ankara: Başbakanlık Basımevi, 2002), 2 Volumes, Vol. 1, p. 6

Foreign Ministry kindly warned him about his unawareness of the operations of Armenian committees in Paris. Accordingly, it was written that the report of the Ambassador on the Armenian community of Paris was not in line with the reports delivered by the Ottoman Ambassador in St. Petersburg, Şakir Paşa. Şakir Paşa had written the Foreign Ministry that there existed some clandestine Armenian committees in Paris and Geneva and their intentions had made them different from other members of the Armenian communities in these cities<sup>5</sup>. In other words, these committees were not innocent organizations that only carried simple charity activities; rather the Ottoman government should follow their actions carefully.

These initial underestimations contributed to the strengthening of Armenian committees in Europe to the extent that they established a strong web among the Armenian organizations located in different cities of Europe, such as London, Geneva, Paris and Marseilles. By early 1890s, these committees began to organize several rebellions in Anatolia. What is more, they were in a close contact with the Armenian religious authorities serving in the Ottoman Empire. In a letter from the Joint Secretary of an umbrella organization called 'Armenian Committees of London and Marseilles' to the Armenian Archbishop of Adana, Mighidritch Vehabedian, revealed how external Armenian committees were interfering in the Armenian community of the Ottoman Empire, which had lived for centuries in peace and harmony with the other communities of the Empire. Accordingly, it was written in this letter that the Archbishop Vehabedian would be secretly informed about the activities of the Armenian protagonists in Adana region. What is more, the plan of an organized rebellion was declared to the Archbishop<sup>6</sup>:

“We sent ammunition to equip one thousand people and we gave the necessary instructions for dynamites. It is necessary to immediately send 300 horsemen to Adana, 60 horsemen to Payas and 200 horsemen to Maraş. Their attack must be harsh and their activities must be kept secret. When you take a telegraph including the cipher 'Pray for your deads', you should start the revolution. Until that time, the government, which has been aware of nothing, would be in slackness. Keep your relations with them; you have to win the confidence and friendship of the governors, governor-generals and district governors by hypocrisy. They should not doubt about these activities of the Armenians.”

5 From Asım Paşa to Esad Paşa, BOA. HR. SYS. 2748/2, 29 May 1884, in *Osmanlı Belgelerinde...*, p. 7

6 This letter is dated 9 August 1892, it was translated by the Ottoman Foreign Ministry, BOA. HR. SYS. 2789/8, in *Osmanlı Belgelerinde...*, p. 19

In this letter, even the methods used by Armenian revolutionary committees could be seen quite openly. The revolution in Adana region should be started "...by cutting the telegraph lines, by setting the public buildings to fire, by killing the high-rank officials, by pillaging the treasury [of the province and the districts], by occupying the ammunition-depots, by releasing the captives from prisons"<sup>7</sup>. What is more, in order to make the Great Powers involved, this rebellion would be announced to major capitals of Europe via the representatives of British Armenian Committee in Cyprus<sup>8</sup>. In other words, this web would be made operational quite successfully. The orders and logistic support of the rebellion would be provided by the committees in Marseilles and London; whereas the duty to misinform European public opinion would be carried by the British Armenian Committee.

The year 1893 witnessed significant Armenian rebellions in Yozgat and Merzifon. The external connection of these rebellions forced the Ottoman government to get more information about the activities of the Armenian committees in Europe. Accordingly, from the correspondence between Paris and Sublime Porte, it can be inferred that, by late 1893, both the Ottoman Ambassador in Paris and the Ottoman Foreign Ministry began to evaluate the activities of Armenian communities more seriously, albeit still insufficiently. Esad Paşa was still occupied the position of Ottoman Ambassador in Paris; however, this time he was not more vigilant than a decade ago and failed to send detailed information regarding three Armenian protagonists living in Marseilles, Avedis Nakhian, Karakin Issakoudi and Andon Sislian<sup>9</sup>. On the other hand, Ottoman Foreign Minister Said Paşa had learned the details from other sources, which depicted these Armenians as dangerous propagandists aiming to raise the European public opinion against the Ottoman Empire<sup>10</sup>. Once more, Foreign Ministry proved the inefficiency of Esad Paşa by sending the information that they had previously demanded from him.

All these documentation proved that the Ottoman Empire did not take the issue of Armenian committees seriously. Other occupations of the Ottoman government might deprive it to deal with this problem efficiently. Particularly, preservation of the occupation of Esad Paşa as the Ottoman Ambassador in Paris more than a decade, which is quite important for the evolution and strengthen-

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7 *Ibid.*, p. 20

8 *Ibid.*

9 From Esad Paşa to Said Paşa, BOA. HR. SYS. 2748/26, 27 November 1893, in *Osmanlı Belgelerinde...*, p. 24

10 From Said Paşa to Esad Paşa, BOA. HR. SYS. 2748/26, 10 January 1894, in *Osmanlı Belgelerinde...*, p. 25

ing of the Armenian committees in France, was a fault having irreversible consequences.

In 1895, Said Paşa decided to take more serious measures regarding the activities of the Armenian communities in Europe as well as the United States and sent a telegraph demanding the list of the members of Armenian committees in London, Paris, Athens, Bucharest and Washington<sup>11</sup>. The answer coming from the new Ottoman Ambassador in Paris, Ziya Paşa, was quite conspicuous. He wrote that he sent the telegraph coming from the Foreign Ministry to the Ottoman consuls in various cities of France. However, neither local French authorities nor the French Foreign Ministry collaborated with the Ottoman diplomats. They either told that there was no Armenian committee in their cities, such as the French Foreign Minister; or that they could not provide any lists demonstrating the members of Armenian committees. Therefore, Ziya Paşa concluded “[u]nder this conditions and because of the refusal of French government to help us on that matter, we have to make special investigations in order to reach desired consequences”<sup>12</sup>. One of such special investigations was made by the Ottoman Consul in Marseilles, who was able to obtain a report from a high-rank police official, including the list of some Armenians who were suspected to be members of an Armenian committee<sup>13</sup>. What was more remarkable was the complaint of the Consul about the Ottoman officials in Nice and Toulon. He wrote that they did not respond him for eight years, and although he had demanded from the Foreign Ministry to change these officials, this demand was not realized<sup>14</sup>. Thus, once more, it was evident that the Ottoman government failed to follow up the vital developments taking place in France.

Another incident that took place in the year 1893 was the arrest of Mighidritch Vehabadian, Archbishop of Adana, in Jerusalem, and its reflections in European press. As mentioned before, the Archbishop was one of the protagonists of the Armenian rebellions in Çukurova region. Even he was given the duty to organize these rebellions by the Joint Armenian Committees of London and Marseilles. This arrest was soon announced to the European capitals via the web of Armenian committees and several articles were written in European newspapers, criticizing

11 From Said Paşa to Rüstem Paşa (London), Ziya Paşa (Paris), Şakir Paşa (Athens), Reşid Bey (Bucharest) and Mavroyeni Bey (Washington), BOA. HR. SYS. 2788/16, 6 January 1895, in *Osmanlı Belgelerinde...*, p. 30

12 From Ziya Paşa to Said Paşa, BOA. HR. SYS. 2788/16, 27 January 1895, in *Osmanlı Belgelerinde...*, p. 31

13 BOA. HR. SYS. 2788/16, 30 January 1895, in *Osmanlı Belgelerinde...*, p. 32

14 *Ibid.*, p. 33

the arrest of the Archbishop. In order to counter these one-sided articles, Said Paşa sent the copy of the aforementioned letter of the Joint Armenian Committees of London and Marseilles to the Ottoman representatives in European and American capitals, and wanted them to write counter-articles in these newspapers via publishing this letter<sup>15</sup>. Many representatives answered this call. Among them was Galib Bey, Ottoman Ambassador in Vienna. Galib Bey wrote that he was able to publish the summary of this aforementioned letter in a newspaper called 'Correspondence de l'Est'. What is more, two other Viennese newspapers, 'Nouvelle Presse Libre' and 'Neuse Wiener Tagblatt' referred to that letter<sup>16</sup>.

By mid-1895 another crisis erupted between Ottoman and French diplomatic circles. It started with a ciphered telegraph from the Province of Sivas, sent to the Prime Ministry. It was written in this telegraph that the French vice-consul in Sivas appointed an Ottoman Armenian, Dr. Karekin, as 'privileged translator', although Karekin was renowned for its activities in the revolutionary committees. He had been arrested before but then released due to lack of enough evidence. What is more, his brother, Dr. Dikran, was arrested and sentenced to death because of his role in Yozgat rebellions. This sentence had not been executed yet; in other words, this appointment would result in French protection for both brothers<sup>17</sup>. However, this time Ottoman Prime Ministry took necessary precautions and French vice-consul had to cancel this appointment<sup>18</sup>.

The intelligence flow about the support of the French government to the Armenian revolutionary activities continued in late 1895. This time, a ciphered telegraph from the Province of Aleppo stipulated a very important connection between the French missionaries in the Ottoman Empire and the Armenian rebellions. Accordingly, from the confessions of an Armenian, it was learned that beneath the houses and school of the French Antrasante priests in Maraş, there was a depot including ammunitions. The Governor of Aleppo asked from the Prime Ministry whether to make necessary investigations or not.<sup>19</sup> The answer

15 From Said Paşa to the Ottoman missions in Paris, London, Vienna, Rome, St. Petersburg, Berlin, Athens, Madrid, Bucharest, Brussels and Washington, BOA. HR. SYS. 2788/23, 3 March 1895, in *Osmanlı Belgelerinde...*, pp. 34-35

16 From Galib Bey to Said Paşa, BOA. HR. SYS. 2788/23, 23 March 1895, in *Osmanlı Belgelerinde...*, p. 35

17 From the Province of Sivas to the Prime Ministry, BOA. A. MKT. MHM 660/2, 10 June 1895, in *Osmanlı Belgelerinde...*, p. 42

18 From the Prime Ministry to the Province of Sivas, BOA. A. MKT. MHM 660/2, 4 July 1895, in *Osmanlı Belgelerinde...*, p. 43

19 From the Province of Aleppo to the Prime Ministry, BOA. A. MKT. MHM 646/32, 8 November 1895, in *Osmanlı Belgelerinde...*, p. 47

of the Prime Ministry, given in the same day, was quite interesting. It is written that it would be improper to make investigations in a place belonging to Europeans with the confessions of one person<sup>20</sup>. In other words, Ottoman government, which had suffered from the foreign interventions in the last century, felt itself obliged to act very cautiously, even though this precaution might mean being silent to the logistical support of the foreigners to the Armenian revolutionary activities.

Although Ottoman Empire avoided taking necessary precautions to prevent prospective Armenian rebellions in order not to attract foreign intervention, the French government had already decided to interfere in the domestic affairs of the Ottoman Empire. Just two days after the correspondence between the Prime Ministry and the Province of Aleppo, Ottoman Embassy in Paris sent two ciphered telegraphs to the Foreign Ministry in which there was a significant warning. In the first telegraph, the Ambassador wrote that the French government decided to send the French navy to Eastern Mediterranean for the annual exercises; but this time these exercises would be realized one month before the normal annual date<sup>21</sup>. The second telegraph included the reason for this date shifting. Accordingly, the Ottoman Ambassador met the French Foreign Minister and asked that reason. The Minister replied<sup>22</sup>:

“I can not hide the reality from you. The telegraphs coming from Istanbul about the persecution of the Christians cannot be relied. As a result of this development and because of the Eastern policy of French government, which had been pursued for so long, French government cannot be stay behind other states and wants to support the union of the Great Powers that was established for the events taking place in the Ottoman provinces where Armenians had been living.”

In other words, Armenian question had been used as an instrument for the Great Powers of the time in order to defend their own interests in the Near East. While the British and the Russians were competing on the region, the French did not want to refrain from this competition, therefore they said that they were a party in this great game.

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20 From the Prime Ministry to the Province of Aleppo, BOA. A. MKT. MHM 646/32, 8 November 1895, in *Osmanlı Belgelerinde...*, p. 48

21 From the Ottoman Embassy in Paris to the Foreign Ministry, BOA. HR. SYS. 469/59, 10 November 1895, in *Osmanlı Belgelerinde...*, p. 48

22 From the Ottoman Embassy in Paris to the Foreign Ministry, BOA. HR. SYS. 469/65, 13 November 1895, in *Osmanlı Belgelerinde...*, pp. 49-50



Armenian activities in Europe reached to such a level that Ottoman diplomats could be able to anticipate the next steps of the revolutionary committees. A letter sent from the Ottoman Ambassador in Paris, Münir Bey, to the Ottoman Foreign Minister Tevfik Paşa in April 1896, included such information. Accordingly, Münir Bey wrote that they had learned from several sources that the Armenian revolutionary committees were organizing a big attack in Istanbul within a month time, because they were thinking that any action in Istanbul would have repercussions in European capitals due to extensive Armenian propaganda<sup>23</sup>. In the letter, the Ottoman government was warned that Istanbul was also chosen because of existence of the representatives of the many European states, which were always acting as the protectors of the Armenians<sup>24</sup>.

This anticipation became real just one and a half month later, with the famous Armenian attack on the Ottoman Bank in June 1896. After intense negotiations among Great Power's representatives and the Ottoman government, the latter granted free outlet for the Armenian militants with the mediation of the Russian Embassy. These militants left the Empire with a French boat, called *Gironde*, and aimed to land at Marseilles. However, Ottoman government wanted the French not to accept these militants. Despite this demand, French government welcomed the militants and did not cooperate with the Ottoman authorities for judicial procedures, such as the provision of the photographs of the militants<sup>25</sup>.

When these incidents took place one after another, Armenian committees in Europe were successful to raise European public opinion against the Ottoman Empire as a result of the Armenian propaganda depicting Turkey as a cruel and despotic state, which suppressed the non-Muslim communities in the Empire. In order to counter this detrimental propaganda, Ottoman government decided to take more active measures. In September 1896, Ottoman Foreign Ministry sent a telegraph to the Ottoman Embassies in Rome, St. Petersburg, Paris, London, Vienna and Berlin, namely, all the Great Powers of Europe. In this telegraph, the Ambassadors were informed about the latest developments in the Ottoman Empire regarding the Armenian question, and they were asked to declare the Ottoman stance to the governments of their respective states regarding the reforms towards the regions where Armenians were living. In these declarations it would be emphasized that the government was trying to realize necessary reforms; how-

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23 From Münir Bey to Tevfik Paşa, BOA. HR: SYS. 2749/13, April 1896, in *Osmanlı Belgelerinde...*, p. 59

24 *Ibid.*

25 From the Foreign Ministry to the Ottoman Consulate General in Marseilles, BOA. HR. SYS. 2802-4, BOA. HR. SYS. 2749/25, 25 March 1897, in *Osmanlı Belgelerinde...*, pp. 94-116

ever, due to Armenian rebellions in these regions it was almost impossible to complete the reform process<sup>26</sup>.

As it was mentioned in the beginning of this article, Ottoman government had begun to demand detailed information about the Armenian committees in France as early as 1883. Such a detailed list could be sent from Mavroyani Bey, the Ottoman consul-general in Marseilles, thirteen years after this demand, on 17 October 1896. In this report, there is a table including the names, addresses and jobs of the members of a particular Armenian committee, which was called as the "The Committee of Marseilles for Helping the Armenian Refugees". It was quite interesting that this committee included several Protestant French bishops, such as Mouline, Gujer and Delord, as well as some English soldiers, such as Colonel Stitt and Captain Hodler<sup>27</sup>. This implied the complex network of relations among the Armenian communities in Europe and the Europeans themselves.

Meanwhile Armenian revolutionary committees in Paris tried to get the support of French public opinion even by using churches and funeral ceremonies in Paris. A ciphered telegraph from Münir Bey to Tevfik Paşa showed how Armenian propaganda became effective. In this telegraph, Münir Bey wrote that Catholic Armenians organized a funeral ceremony in the Church of Saint Clotilde in Paris, and a Catholic Armenian priest delivered a speech in which he exclaimed that during the Crusades Armenians had saved the French soldiers and now the Armenians demanded the help of French people in order to be saved from the persecution of the Ottoman Empire<sup>28</sup>. At the end of the ceremony French priest of the Church, Charmetan, collected money from the attendants to support the Armenian committees.

Another significant event regarding French-Armenian relations and its implications on Ottoman Armenians was the "Monsieur Barthélemy case". This issue had started on May 1896. Accordingly, Monsieur Barthélemy, the French Consul in Aleppo, went Maraş for mediation between Armenian and Muslim communities; however, the Muslim community did not welcome his inclination towards Armenian side. Although this was the case, as a ciphered telegraph from Raif Bey, the Governor of Aleppo, revealed, there were rumors that the French government

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26 From the Foreign Ministry to the Ottoman Embassies in Rome, St. Petersburg, Paris, London, Vienna and Berlin, BOA. HR. SYS. 2789/8, 30 September 1896, in *Osmanlı Belgelerinde...*, p. 65

27 From Mavroyeni Bey to Tevfik Paşa, BOA. HR. SYS. 2786-1/242, 17 October 1896, in *Osmanlı Belgelerinde...*, pp. 69-70

28 From Münir Bey to Tevfik Paşa, BOA. HR. SYS. 2747/57, 2 November 1896, in *Osmanlı Belgelerinde...*, p. 73

would appoint him as the permanent vice-consul of Maraş. Raif Bey warned the government to take necessary measures<sup>29</sup>. These rumors became true and Monsieur Barthélemy was appointed as the vice-consul of Maraş despite the efforts of the Ottoman government on that matter. Later telegraphs included detailed information on the French vice-consul and depicted his hatred towards the Muslims in Maraş region and his tolerance towards the Armenian atrocities<sup>30</sup>. What is more, from other documentation, it was understood that a conspiracy was tried to be organized against the government in order to facilitate French intervention. Accordingly, French Ambassador in Istanbul applied to the Prime Ministry by arguing that he was informed of an organized suicide against the Monsieur Barthélemy, and he warned the Ottoman government that the responsibility of this prospective crime would be upon the Sublime Porte<sup>31</sup>. Consequently, the government took necessary precautions to prevent such a suicide attempt. This event, despite its relative insignificance, showed how a small matter could easily be a matter of international controversy.

Ottoman defeat in the Balkan Wars emerged as an opportunity for the Armenian committees in Europe in order to raise the European public opinion against the Ottoman Empire more. Particularly, Armenians tried to influence the participants of the London Conference, which was convened to discuss the post-Balkan Wars situation. Accordingly, an Armenian committee under the leadership of Boghos Nubar Paşa aimed to put the issue of reform in the Ottoman provinces, where Armenians had been living, to the agenda of the Conference. The report of Ottoman Ambassador in Vienna, Hüseyin Hilmi Bey, reflected the urgency of this issue of reform. He wrote that other provinces of the Ottoman Empire were also in need of immediate and serious reforms; however, Eastern provinces had a special status since they attracted foreign attention more. Thus reforms developed to ameliorate Eastern provinces were more urgent than the other provinces<sup>32</sup>. In other words, in order to prevent further foreign intervention it was necessary to carry the reform process as soon and efficient as possible.

In these days, France was highly influenced from the Armenian propaganda. In June 1913 the French government sent a note to the Ottoman government and demanded the appointment of a 'high commissar' for the Eastern provinces. In a telegraph to the Prime Minister Said Paşa, Ottoman Ambassador in Paris,

29 From Raif Bey to the Prime Ministry, BOA. A. MKT. MHM. 651/17, 10 June 1896, in *Osmanlı Belgelerinde...*, p. 132

30 From the Governorship of Maraş to the Prime Ministry, BOA. Y. A. HUS. 377/54, 28 September 1897, in *Osmanlı Belgelerinde...*, p. 136

31 From the Foreign Ministry to the Prime Ministry, BOA. HR. SYS. 2793/12, 22 October 1899, in *Osmanlı Belgelerinde...*, p. 141

32 From Hüseyin Hilmi Bey to the Foreign Ministry, BOA. HR. SYS. 2817-1/44, 8 February 1913, in *Osmanlı Belgelerinde...*, p. 193

Rıfat Paşa, warned the government to accept this demand and appoint a high commissar. Otherwise, he argued, the initiative would pass to the foreign governments<sup>33</sup>.

All in all, within the thirty years from 1883 to 1914, it was evident that Armenian communities in Europe established an excellent web of revolutionary committees, which were quite active in terms of arousing European public opinion via continuously providing it with disinformation. The Armenian-French connection in this period was relatively more informal and less direct. This connection was mainly composed of the support of some French government officials to the Armenian committees in France and of the French protection of some Armenian citizens of the Ottoman Empire. However, when the First World War erupted and when the Ottoman Empire declared war against the Allied Powers, French-Armenian connection became more formal and direct. What is more, this connection would soon turn out to be a full-scale collaboration with the incorporation of Armenian militants into the French army within the framework of the Eastern Legion.

## II. FRENCH-ARMENIAN CONNECTION DURING THE FIRST YEARS OF THE FIRST WORLD WAR (1914-1916) AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE EASTERN LEGION

Just one year after the eruption of the First World War and seven months after the Ottoman entry into the war on the side of Germany, in late May 1915, Ottoman Armenians started a significant rebellion in Zeytun. Ottoman troops were sent the region in order to suppress this rebellion despite the fragility of the condition of the Ottoman Empire. Gallipoli was still a battlefield; whereas Ottoman armies in Mesopotamia were fighting with the Allied troops. Within these difficult times, Armenian rebellion in Zeytun would be very detrimental. Armenians saw that without foreign intervention they could not succeed in their quest. Thus they began to send telegraphs to the Armenian committees in Europe and demanded them to provide European support. For example, in a telegraph written by an Ottoman Armenian to Boghos Nubar Paşa, it was written that Zeytun Armenians were fighting against 20.000 Ottoman troops and if they were not supported, their situation would be worsened<sup>34</sup>.

33 From Rıfat Paşa to Said Paşa, BOA. HR. SYS. 1866-6/41, 23 June 1913, in *Osmanlı Belgelerinde...*, p. 195

34 From M. Mıgırdıçyan to Boghos Nubar Paşa, 28 May 1915, in *Fransız Diplomatik Belgelerinde Ermeni*

Among the European powers, Armenians counted on France the most. Arshag Tchobanian, a prominent protagonist of the Armenian community in France wrote a letter to the French Foreign Minister Delcassé and demanded French support<sup>35</sup>. After claiming that the Armenians of the Ottoman Empire were under harsh persecution, he argued that the Armenians were trying to resist against the destruction of Cilician Armenia, as if such a state existed at that time. What is more, he wrote that the Armenians were ready to help the French to transform Cilicia a French province dependent on French Syria. He added that<sup>36</sup>:

“France has interests in Cilicia and wants to protect them. At this point, Armenian interests will be protected as well... For ten centuries Cilicia has an Armenian character. Europe gave the name of ‘Little Armenia’ to this region at eleventh century... After eleventh century this region was occupied by the Turks... Currently, in whole Cilicia there are more than 400.000 Armenians... Armenians were educated in French schools... We are supporting the grand design [incorporation of Cilicia to the French Syria] together with our Syrian brothers.”

As it can be seen, Armenians were not only demanding French support against the Ottoman troops, but they also wanted France to occupy Cilicia. French government did not respond to this letter. Meanwhile, the Ottoman Empire was able to suppress the rebellion. This was reflected by Tchobanian in another letter to the French Foreign Minister, in which he depicted the suppression of the Armenian rebellion as the massacre of the Armenians by the Ottoman Empire<sup>37</sup>. These letters were followed by another letter, this time from the Armenian Cathogigos Kevork to the French Foreign Minister, repeating the same thing: French support to the Armenian clause. In this letter the Cathogigos also declared that he has authorized Boghos Nubar Pasha as the representative of the Armenian Church<sup>38</sup>.

From September 1915 onwards, there emerged the problem of Armenian fugitives, which came to Egypt. Accordingly, particularly after the suppression of Zeytun rebellion, a group of Armenians fled to Egypt. These Armenians became a matter of correspondence between the French representatives in Egypt and

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*Olaylar*, Vol. 2, p. 138

35 From M. Tchobanian to M. Delcassé, 3 June 1915, in *Fransız Diplomatik Belgelerinde...*, Vol. 2, pp. 143-148

36 *Ibid.*

37 From M. Tchobanian to M. Delcassé, 9 July 1915, in *Fransız Diplomatik Belgelerinde...*, Vol. 2, pp. 169-177

38 From Cathogigos Kevork to M. Delcassé, 5 October 1915, in *Fransız Diplomatik Belgelerinde...*, Vol. 2, p. 230

French Foreign Ministry. At that period Egypt was a British protectorate, thus it was the British authorities that would accept these Armenians or not. Armenians, on the other hand, relied on the French not on the British. Therefore the French ambassador in Great Britain, Paul Cambon, met with the British Foreign Minister Sir Edward Grey. According to a telegraph sent from Cambon to French Foreign Ministry, it was understood that the British would not accept the settlement of the Armenians in Egypt, because the Armenians were perceived by the Egyptians as a nation that betrayed the Sultan<sup>39</sup>. Therefore, Cambon concluded that the British would not help on that matter and advised the government to apply Italy for the settlement of these Armenians in Rhodes. French government asked the governments of Italy, Algeria, Tunisia and Morocco whether there are available conditions for the settlement of these Armenians in these countries; but all of them responded negatively either for political or economic reasons<sup>40</sup>.

Understanding that it would be impossible to settle these Armenians in North Africa, the French Foreign Ministry decided to learn about their qualities more, because the French government had other intentions for these people. In a telegraph from the French Foreign Minister to the French envoy in Cairo, Monsieur Defrance, it was asked whether the male Armenian refugees could be used as legionnaires for the French operations in the East<sup>41</sup>.

The reply of the French envoy in Cairo about the Armenian refugees provided significant information. Accordingly, the number of refugees was 869 and among them there were 500 men available to be trained as soldiers. These volunteers could be incorporated to the Armenian Legion and could be used in a prospective French attack towards Iskenderun region<sup>42</sup>.

However, British authorities in Egypt had other intentions for the Armenian

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39 From Paul Cambon to French Foreign Ministry, 15 September 1915, in *Fransız Diplomatik Belgelerinde...*, Vol. 4, p. 10

40 From French Foreign Ministry to the French Ambassador in Rome, 15 September 1915, in *Fransız Diplomatik Belgelerinde...*, Vol. 4, p. 11; From French Foreign Ministry to the governments of Algeria, Tunisia and Morocco, 16 September 1915, in *Fransız Diplomatik Belgelerinde...*, Vol. 4, p. 13; From Tunisian government to the French Foreign Ministry, 18 September 1915, in *Fransız Diplomatik Belgelerinde...*, Vol. 4, p. 17; From Moroccan government to the French Foreign Ministry, 20 September 1915, in *Fransız Diplomatik Belgelerinde...*, Vol. 4, p. 19; From Algerian Governor-General to the French Foreign Ministry, 9 October 1915, in *Fransız Diplomatik Belgelerinde...*, Vol. 4, p. 41

41 From French Foreign Ministry to M. Defrance, 17 September 1915, in *Fransız Diplomatik Belgelerinde...*, Vol. 4, p. 15

42 From M. Defrance to the French Foreign Ministry, 19 September 1915, in *Fransız Diplomatik Belgelerinde...*, Vol. 4, p. 18

refugees. They had already established a temporary camp for them. At the expense of their admittance as refugees, the British wanted the strong Armenian males to work for the British port construction site in Mudros<sup>43</sup>. However, Armenians were not content with this situation. As Defrance wrote to the Foreign Ministry<sup>44</sup>:

“...Strong Armenians do not want to be used as workers...Most of them accept that they owe much to us and they want to contribute to our efforts...[However], they do not want to be treated as the Turkish captives or the black Somalians that have been forced to work in Mudros.”

Indeed, at that period, in Egypt there was a strong Armenian community. French government thought that the Egyptian Armenians could be applied to help the Armenian refugees. However, Egyptian Armenians did not respond the calls of the French government to help their ‘brothers’. In a telegraph to French Foreign Minister René Viviani, Defrance wrote “...despite my continuous calls, I can not find enough contributions from Egyptian Armenians for the Armenian refugees in Port Said.”<sup>45</sup>

There emerged a significant confusion about what to do with the Armenian refugees. There was also a confusion of authority. Accordingly, these Armenians were on the Egyptian soil, which was a British protectorate; therefore it was Britain that should take the necessary measures about them. However, these Armenians felt themselves loyal not to Britain but to France and continuously demanded French protection. Therefore French and British authorities had to cooperate on that matter. Britain did not want permanent settlement of the Armenians in Egypt because it feared from the reaction of the Egyptian Muslims. Rather, British authorities planned to bring these Armenians to Mudros and use them as workers in the port construction facilities. On the other hand, French government was under the pressure of the Armenian community in France and tried to settle these refugees in one of the French possessions in North Africa. However, when this option seemed impracticable; there is one option left: to use them as soldiers against the Ottoman Empire. Hence, there emerged the idea of establishing an Armenian legion to be used in the prospective French assaults towards Cilicia region.

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43 From the British Ambassador in Paris to the French Foreign Ministry, 11 October 1915, in *Fransız Diplomatik Belgelerinde...*, Vol. 4, p. 43

44 From M. Defrance to the French Foreign Ministry, 13 October 1915, in *Fransız Diplomatik Belgelerinde...*, Vol. 4, p. 47

45 From M. Defrance to the French Foreign Ministry, 29 October 1915, in *Fransız Diplomatik Belgelerinde...*, Vol. 4, p. 49

By November 1915, DeFrance prepared a plan to use the Armenian refugees as soldiers. He sent a report to the Foreign Ministry, in which he proposed organization of an Armenian rebellion in Cilicia and a subsequent French campaign to Syria in order to support this rebellion. The protagonists of this rebellion would be the Armenians trained by the French in Port Said<sup>46</sup>. British and French authorities agreed on a plan with which the Armenian refugees would be provided with weapons and ammunition and would be sent to Cilicia when necessary<sup>47</sup>.

The Arab Revolt, which erupted on 8 June 1916, contributed much to the shaping of British and French intentions on the Armenian refugees in Port Said. In a ciphered telegraph from Paul Cambon, the French Ambassador in London, to the Foreign Ministry, the preliminary reflections of this plan could be seen<sup>48</sup>. Accordingly, British and French authorities agreed that the Armenian legion would be trained in Cyprus, another British protectorate, by French soldiers. Their weapons and ammunition would be provided by the French army. What is more, it was intended to link the prospective activities of this legion to the Arab Revolt. In a telegraph sent from French Foreign Minister to the French Minister of War, it was written that<sup>49</sup>:

“The Arab Revolt will not only threaten Turkish sovereignty in the [Arabian] Peninsula, but also in Syria and Palestine...Existence of [Armenian] detachments near Adana and Iskenderun will prevent the Turks to send all their forces to the south in order to suppress the Sharif of Mecca.”

What is more, in that telegraph, it was also asked from the Minister of War that whether 5000 Armenian volunteers could be equipped or not<sup>50</sup>. In other words, from the crux of Armenian refugees in Port Said, a fully-equipped army would be established by the French.

These plans were later incorporated into a detailed report and sent to the Commander-General of the French Armies, General Joseph Joffre, for his opinion.

46 From French Foreign Ministry to the French Marine Ministry, 10 November 1915, in *Fransız Diplomatik Belgelerinde...*, Vol. 4, p. 63

47 From M. DeFrance to the French Foreign Ministry, 10 February 1916, in *Fransız Diplomatik Belgelerinde...*, Vol. 4, p. 64

48 From Paul Cambon to the French Foreign Minister, 4 July 1916, in *Fransız Diplomatik Belgelerinde...*, Vol. 4, p. 79

49 From French Foreign Minister to the French Minister of War, 19 July 1916, in *Fransız Diplomatik Belgelerinde...*, Vol. 4, p. 82

50 Ibid.



The reply of the General was quite conspicuous. He wrote that the Armenian legion should be sent to northern Syria in order to support the Ensari tribe, which was preparing to start a rebellion against the Ottoman Empire<sup>51</sup>. He added that "...the grave political difficulties that threaten the Ottoman Empire should be used efficiently"<sup>52</sup>. In other words, French strategy was based on a joint attack against the Ottoman Empire by the Arabs and the Armenians.

This plan could not be fulfilled. One of the reasons of this failure was the contention between Britain and France about the Port Said Armenians. On September 1916, it was understood that the British wanted the French to depart Armenians from Egypt as soon as possible. The reason for this demand was mainly financial. In a ciphered telegraph from DeFrance to the French Foreign Ministry, it was written that the British spent 30.000 frank for the Armenian legion monthly, and this was an extra burden on the British finance. If the legion would not be brought elsewhere the British would demand the French to pay these expenses<sup>53</sup>.

The failure of using the Armenians to support the Arab Revolt brought the British and French authorities at the brink of a significant crisis. This was quite evident in the telegraph sent by Colonel Bremond, the Chief of the French Military Mission in Egypt, to the French Foreign Minister<sup>54</sup>. Accordingly Bremond wrote that the British would not permit the Armenian camp in Port Said to turn into a permanent settlement. Thus the French authorities should reach an agreement with the British. However, he also mentioned that the British Governor of Cyprus did not want the Armenians to be brought to Cyprus. Therefore, British and French authorities began to negotiate on this matter.

On September 10, Lieutenant Giraud presented a report to the Ministry of War about the education of the Armenian troops, in which he wrote that the training sessions were completed. He further noted that as the team leaders, those Armenians, which had previously served for the Ottoman army, would be appointed. If Armenians were to be commanded by themselves, the best option for their command was an Armenian protagonist Yessri Yakoubian, which had fought against the Ottoman Empire before<sup>55</sup>.

51 From General Joffre to French Minister of War, 1 August 1916, in *Fransız Diplomatik Belgelerinde...*, Vol. 4, pp. 90-93

52 Ibid.

53 From DeFrance to the French Foreign Minister, 9 September 1916, in *Fransız Diplomatik Belgelerinde...*, Vol. 4, p. 112

54 From Colonel Bremond to the French Foreign Minister, 10 September 1916, in *Fransız Diplomatik Belgelerinde...*, Vol. 4, pp. 127-132

55 The report prepared by Lieutenant Giraud, 10 September 1916, in *Fransız Diplomatik Belgelerinde...*, pp. 152-160

Since there were unplanned delays in the preparation and installation of the Armenian troops, the rift between Britain and France increased. The discontent of this rift was reflected in a ciphered telegraph from DeFrance to the French Foreign Minister. Accordingly, DeFrance wrote that<sup>56</sup>:

“The question of the utilization of Port Said Armenians created some sort of uneasiness between our navy and the British authorities. It is necessary to take a concrete decision as soon as possible”

One month later, some significant steps began to be taken. Some French officers began to get in touch with the British authorities. For example, Colonel Bremond demanded the British authorities to release all prisoners in Syria, and wrote that these prisoners would be used as additional troops for the prospective Eastern legion<sup>57</sup>. Also Colonel Romieu wrote to the Ministry of War that he had reached an agreement with General Murray with which it was decided that male Armenians would be brought to Cyprus while women and children would be left in Port Said.

Finally, on late November 1916, the French Minister of War wrote to the French Foreign Minister that the project of the Eastern Legion would be finalized:

“On November 15, I have decided, without delay, to establish the Eastern Legion from the volunteers of Ottoman citizens and under the guidance of French soldiers. Those Armenian and Syrian volunteers, who want to join, will serve under the French flag in Turkey during the war.”

As it can be seen, although using the Armenians as regular troops in the war was considered for so long, it can only be finalized as late as November 1916 due to the lack of coordination between the Allied powers. However, once established and deployed in the Southeastern Mediterranean region this legion would be one of the bloodiest troops of the First World War, responsible for many massacres and atrocities in this region.

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56 From DeFrance to the French Foreign Ministry, 10 September 1916, in *Fransız Diplomatik Belgelerinde...*, pp. 160-162

57 From DeFrance to the French Foreign Ministry, 10 October 1916, in *Fransız Diplomatik Belgelerinde...*, p. 178

## CONCLUSION

All in all, it can be argued that the French-Armenian connection, which had been established as early as the mid-nineteenth century, turned out to be a full-scale collaboration by the end of the century and particularly during and after the First World War. As archival investigations reveals, the French government has always supported the Armenian community in France against the Ottoman Empire and protected them, although they did not hesitate to act against the Ottoman Empire via organizing rebellions in the Empire or via announcing the existing rebellions to the European public opinion as the persecution of the Christians.

Ottoman Empire, on the other hand, remained ineffective in following the activities of the Armenian committees in Europe. Either because of the ineptness of some of the Ottoman Ambassadors served in several European capitals, or because of the concern to raise the possibility of European intervention, the Ottoman Empire remained silent in the very emergence of this question of Armenian committees in Europe. The cost of this ineffectiveness was quite high because many Armenian rebellions in the Empire were either directly or indirectly organized and financed by the European Armenian Committees.

Ottoman entry in the First World War facilitated the realization of the ambitions of France and the Armenians on the Ottoman Empire. Indeed, the Armenians wanted to establish an independent Armenian state; however, they were well aware that without foreign intervention, this aim could not be fulfilled. Therefore, some Armenians collaborated with the Russians and others collaborated with the French. One of the most significant results of this Armenian-French connection was the establishment of the French Eastern Legion.

The process of establishment of this legion was quite controversial and created a significant conflict between the British and the French, the two allies of the First World War. The Armenians fled from the Ottoman Empire to Egypt, a British Protectorate, counted on the French; however, the French had neither the desire nor the capabilities to bring them to a French possession. The only way for the French to get over this problem was to make these Armenians soldiers and use them in their quest in Anatolia without delay, because their presence in Egypt became to costly for the British, who want to use these Armenians as workers. Therefore, these Armenians, together with those participating the legion from France, established the crux of one of the bloodiest troops of the First World war, namely the Legion d'Orient.

# TURKISH-ARMENIAN RELATIONS IN THE SHADOW OF 1915

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## **Abstract:**

In this article, it is intended to show how the Armenian question turned out to be a significant determinant of Turkish-Armenian relations. Within this framework, starting from the very emergence of this question in the late nineteenth century, inter-communal relations, which had been peaceful and harmonious, in general, had deteriorated. What is more, foreign interventions and the role of European states in the escalation of this question are quite significant as well. This article, therefore, aims to explain the historical development of the Armenian question and its contemporary ramifications in Turkish-Armenian relations.

**Key Words:** Turkish-Armenian Relations, So-Called Armenian Genocide, Ottoman Empire, Revolutionary Armenian Committees

## **Öz:**

Bu makalede Ermeni meselesinin Türk-Ermeni ilişkilerinde nasıl önemli bir etmen olduğu üzerinde durulmaktadır. Bu çerçevede, özellikle bu sorunun ortaya çıktığı on dokuzuncu yüzyıl sonlarında, o zamana kadar barış ve uyum içerisinde yürütülen toplumlar arası ilişkilerin nasıl bozulduğu incelenmektedir. Dahası, dış müdahaleler ve bu sorunun ilerlemesinde Avrupa Devletleri'nin rolü de son derece önemlidir. Bu nedenle bu makalede Ermeni sorununun tarihsel gelişimi ve bu sorunun günümüzdeki Türk-Ermeni ilişkilerine yansımaları incelenecektir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Türk-Ermeni İlişkileri, Sözde Ermeni Soykırımı, Osmanlı İmparatorluğu, Devrimci Ermeni Komiteleri.

**T**he relations between Turkey and Armenia are laden with problems. The European Parliament has referred to the Armenian question in the decision it accepted in 2000 vis-à-vis the inspection of Turkish membership to the EU by repeating its former decision of 1987, which reflected

the Armenian point of view<sup>1</sup>. The Italian parliament in 2000, and the French National Assembly on 18 April 2001, adopted laws recognizing the so-called Armenian genocide. These can be seen as obstacles created in front of Turkey, which single-mindedly continues in its quest for EU membership. Also in 2001, the EU member-states have asked of Turkey and Azerbaijan to lift the embargo they imposed on Armenia and claimed that insisting on the pursuit of the embargo was to harden Turkish membership to the EU, in the wake of the EU – Armenia parliamentary cooperation meetings which took place in Brussels. With partial influence of this meeting, political dialogue between Turkey and Armenia began in 2002; the foreign ministers of the two countries came together in different occasions.

One of the crucial steps in the normalisation of the relations between the two countries is the establishment of the “Turkish-Armenian Peace Commission”. The future of the two countries’ interrelation is discussed more frequently after Turkey has been granted with the commencement of negotiation process by the EU for accession. Article 20 of the decisions taken on 17 December 2004 demands Turkey to improve relations with its neighbours, and that the existing problems should be solved by peaceful means. To have good relations with its neighbours is also desired by Turkey. In its relations with Armenia, Turkey is presented to the world public opinion as the side, which refrains from any solution. However, Turkey was one of the first few countries, which accepted independence of Armenia without any pre-conditions, and even sent some humanitarian aid to Armenia in the wake of its declaration of independence as well as inviting it to become a founding member of Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization.

In response to the Turkish behaviour, the Levon Ter Petrosyan administration had waved aside the genocide claims even for a while. Considering that Turkey is the only gateway for Armenia in its opening to the West and in the solution of the country’s economic troubles, Petrosyan had refrained from bringing the expression “the Republic of Armenia will continue to support all efforts in the international acceptance of the Armenian Genocide committed in 1915 in the Ottoman Turkey and Western Armenia” which is written in the Article 11 of Armenian Parliament’s Declaration of Independence proclaimed on 23 August 1991, into international arena. Later on, Petrosyan resisted the pressure from the nationalists in his country and managed to have the same quote omitted in the text of Armenian constitution. In addition to this, when becoming a member of

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1 Ömer E.Lütem, “1980’den Günümüze Ermeni Meselesinde Gelişmeler”, *International Turkish-Armenian Symposium*, 24-25 May 2001, (İstanbul: 2001), p. 489.

OSCE in 1992, Armenia has also accepted the membership requirement of not to ask any changes in the existing borders.<sup>2</sup> Petrosyan has even removed the foreign minister Raffi Hovannissian from office in October 1992 after one year of service for his speeches criticising Turkey. He also attempted at nullifying the impact of the Diaspora organisations on Armenia and imposed a ban on the activities of the Tashnaks known with their radical anti-Turkish attitudes and who thought that he, himself, was not tough enough against Turkey and Azerbaijan.

What brought Turkish-Armenian relations to a diplomatic break was the Armenian policy towards Nagorno-Karabakh, or, to better put it, its attempt to change borders by force and with Russian assistance. The Armenian attack on Nakhichevan after Karabakh and the Hocalı Massacre were the point when Turkey's patience was stretched to the limit. The words of the then Turkish president Turgut Özal, implying Turkey might enter to war, were harshly replied by CIS chief of joint staff Shaposhnikov who implied Turkish involvement might lead to Third World War. As can be seen, the problem is not only the Azeri-Armenian struggle, but it is Russian attempt at staying in the region and Turkish protection of its borders in Caucasia.

The mild policy pursued by Levon Ter-Petrosyan towards Turkey left its place to an environment of complete mistrust after the 1998 election of Robert Kocharian to presidency. Kocharian, who reinstated Tashnak political activities, also did not refrain from bringing the 'genocide claims' to the scene with his words "... let us make peace but let us not forget the past"<sup>3</sup> Kocharian adopted a tough policy towards Turkey and kept mentioning old enmities and historical events. He has also adopted an uncompromising attitude towards the Nagorno-Karabakh problem. He prompted the Armenian Diaspora for Turkish acceptance of the genocide as a move against Turkey's focus on the Nagorno-Karabakh issue in its relations with Armenia. As mentioned above, although there was a rapprochement in the first stages of Turkish-Armenian relations, no Armenian leader including Ter-Petrosyan ever clearly gave up the aims of the "Greater Armenia" project towards Turkey and the demands of compensation for the so-called 1915 Armenian genocide. In contrast, the head of the Armenian State Presidency's Human Rights Commission Paruyr Hayrikyan asked Russia on 12 March 2001 to abolish the 1921 Moscow and Kars Treaties and that Armenia should have Kars and Ardahan left to Turkey with these agreements.<sup>4</sup> What drives Armenia to this

2 Mustafa Aydın, "Kafkasya ve Orta Asya ile İlişkiler", Baskın Oran (ed.), *Türk Dış Politikası, Kurtuluş Savaşından Bugüne Olgular, Belgeler, Yorumlar*, Cilt II, 4. Baskı, (İstanbul: 2002), p. 407-408.

3 *Milliyet*, 25 April 2000.

4 Mustafa Aydın, *op.cit.*, p. 408.

presumptuous and uncompromising stance against Turkey despite the incomparable difference in power is the Western and Russian support it feels to have. The intensity of the accusations towards Turkey have intensified from April 2005 as it was the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Armenian relocation of 1915, and escalated to the point of the arrest of the head of the Turkish Historical Society in Switzerland for his rejection of the genocide allegations. The Armenian problem and Turkey's relation with Armenia are used as a means of political pressure in the orientation of the Turkish-EU relations.

The roots of the claims of the so-called Armenian genocide that Turkey has to face remain in the clash of interest in the past and the present. It would be more suitable to relate the Western support to the Armenian genocide with a wish to obtain a part of the rich Caucasian underground resources rather than human rights issues.<sup>5</sup> In fact, the words of Atatürk "the Armenian problem is wished to be solved according to the economic and political interests of world capitalists instead of the real interests of the Armenian nation", dated 1919, are still valid at our time. It is necessary to analyse the events that led up to 1915 in order to understand the relations of Turkey –presented as the uncompromising party- with Armenia, the claims of genocide which constitute a major element in the point this relationship came to at the moment, and the attitude of the West, because the past affects the present and the future of the relations.

The right to preserve their own ethnic and religious identities was granted to the minorities living in the Ottoman Empire through the "millet system". At the time of Mehmet II the Conqueror, significant religious rights were granted to the non-Muslims in the empire; the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate was given more legal and religious rights than under the Byzantine rule.

The Armenians were scattered around the Empire without a country and without independence when Ottomans stepped into the stage of history, so they were never a majority in any region, and lacked supremacy in any region as to claim it was taken from them. They lived in even better conditions than the Turks who ruled the empire during Ottoman era, attending significant political posts.<sup>6</sup> Just like other minorities, they were exempt from some duties the Muslims were to carry out, thus were successful in commerce and crafts. At the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the Düzyan family of Divrik provided jewellery for the Palace; members of the

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5 Nürşen Mazıcı, "Ermeni Sorununa İlişkin Politikalar ve Stratejiler", in Idris Bal (ed.), *Türk Dış Politikası*, (İstanbul: 2001), p.717.

6 On Armenians' social and economic conditions in the Ottoman Empire, see, Eremya Çelebi Kömürçiyân, *İstanbul Tarihî, XVII. Asırda İstanbul*, (translated by Hrand D.Andreasyan), (İstanbul: 1952).

Dadyan family had appointed as ministers for arsenal<sup>7</sup>. In 1879, Artin Dadyan was appointed as the secretary of the Ottoman Ministry of Interior.<sup>8</sup> During the period of the First Constitution, Maksutyán Sebuh and Yazıcıyan Rupen became deputies, and again in the same century, key positions were held by Krikor Margosyan in the Foreign Ministry, by Krikor Papazyan at the Ministry of Interior, by Çamiç Ohonnos at the Ministry of Finance, by Tomas Terziyan at the Ministry of Education, by Saris Karakoç at the Ministry of Justice. There were also deputies at the time of the Second Constitution period such as Krikor Zahrab, and Agop Babikyan. In 1912, all the forty registered bankers in Istanbul were non-Muslims and twelve of them were Armenians.<sup>9</sup> The value attributed to the Armenians can be understood from the *Millet-i Sadıka* (Loyal Nation) definition of the Armenians who were always seen as favourites among the non-Muslims. There were Armenians who supported this view. The Armenian Patriarch Gevond Turyan once said “the Armenians lived with Turks in the Turkish lands for six hundred years enjoying a vast social and religious liberty no other nation has seen”.<sup>10</sup> So, what was the process that turned the Turkish-Armenian friendship –which went well into the 19<sup>th</sup> century- into the enmity of the Armenians towards the Turks?

The decline of the Ottoman Empire, which began with the Treaty of Karlowitz in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, has given way to the imperialist strategy implemented by the Great Powers, which started their ascendancy at the same period which was known as the “Eastern Question”. This imperialist policy made the Armenian question an integral part of the Eastern Question.

The currents of nationalism spread after the declarations in America that “everyone was created equal” and of the “Human and Citizen Rights” in France in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, have shown their impact on the Ottoman minorities, too, giving way to the Great Powers to claim guardianship over the non-Muslim minorities in the Ottoman Empire and to their pressures asking for reform in favour of these minorities. As a result of the rampant nationalistic ideas among the minorities, there were insurrections over the imperial territories and the Ottomans had to grant independence to Greece, greater autonomy for Moldova and Wallachia, and accepted the establishment of an autonomous Serbian principality. The beginning of the attempts for an Armenian uprising can be traced back even prior

7 Y. Çark, *Türk Devleti Hizmetinde Ermeniler, 1453-1953*, (İstanbul: 1953), pp. 47-129.

8 Nejat Göyünç, Osmanlı İdaresinde Ermeniler, (*Yeni Türkiye*, No. 38, March-April 2001), p. 633.

9 Charles Issawi, “The Transformation of the Economic Position of the Millets in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century”, Bernard Lewis- Benjamin Braude (ed.), *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire*, (New York: 1982), p. 261.

10 Gevond Turyan, “A Qui La Faute? Aux Partis”, *Revue Arménien*, publication de la Dadjar, Constantinople, 1917, cited by Erdal İler, *Ermeni Kilisesi ve Terör*, (Ankara: 1996), p. 75.



to the conclusion of the 1774 Kuchuk Kainarji Treaty. With this treaty, Russia assumed guardianship for the Christian minorities of the Empire, especially of the Orthodox Christians. The policy Russia pursued on the Ottoman Empire gave way to the 1853 Crimean War, and the Sultan had to proclaim that he would not distinguish between his subjects whatever their belief might be in the 1856 Edict of Reform. A decision concerning the Edict of Reform was added to the Article 9 of the Paris Peace Treaty of 30 March 1856, which ended the Crimean War so that Russia could not intervene in Ottoman internal affairs as the guardian of the Christians.<sup>11</sup> However, the following events proved just the opposite of these expectations and although Russian intervention was prevented, now the intervention of the six countries has come into being. Despite all these developments, there was no serious Armenian problem in the Ottoman Empire.<sup>12</sup>

The Ottoman-Russian War gave way to new opportunities for the Armenians of the Empire. As they supported the Russians during the war, they asked them to have an article in the peace treaty about Armenians, and they were granted this wish with the 16<sup>th</sup> Article of the Treaty of San Stefano.<sup>13</sup> As it became evident that if the treaty were to be implemented, international balance of power in the Balkans and Caucasia would change in favour of Russia, a new treaty was signed under British influence in July 1878 in Berlin. The Berlin Treaty has become a milestone in the Turkish-Armenian relations. It has been decided in accordance with Article 61 of the treaty that reforms were to be carried out in six East Anatolian provinces where Armenians lived, under the supervision of the Great Powers. With this treaty, for the first time in history, issues about the Armenians that directly concern the Ottoman State were included in international law and again with this agreement Armenians began to dream about an “Armenian homeland” in Anatolia. To realise this dream, they established the Armenakan (in 1885 in Van), Hinchak (in 1897 in Switzerland), and Tashnak (Tashnaksutyun, in Tblisi in 1890) committees.<sup>14</sup> Louise Nalbandian describes the reason for the establishment of the Committees with the words “Terror and provocation were needed to set the feelings of the Armenian nation in motion. The [Armenian] populace was to be provoked against its enemies and the retaliation of the enemy was to be used”.<sup>15</sup>

11 See, Article 9 of the Paris Treaty in Enver Ziya Karal, *Osmanlı Tarihi*, V. 5, (Ankara: 1988), p. 244.

12 *Ibid.*, V. 8, (Ankara: 1988), p. 126.

13 Cevdet Küçük, *Osmanlı Diplomasisinde Ermeni Meselesinin Ortaya Çıkışı (1878-1879)*, (İstanbul: 1984), No.3201, p. 3.

14 For detailed information on the Committees, see A. Süslü, *Türk Tarihinde Ermeniler*, p. 144; Esat Uras, p. 442., Kamuran Gürün, p. 129; *Ermeni Komiteleri (1891-1895)*, (Ankara: 2001), I-XIV.

15 Louise Nalbandian, *Armenian Revolutionary Movement*, (California: University of California Press, 1963), p. 110; William L. Langer, *The Diplomacy of Imperialism*, (New York: 1968).

These committees started about 40 insurrections which began with the 1890 Erzurum rebellion and which went on till the 1909 Adana rebellion, and even went so far as to attempt a failed assassination against Sultan Abdulhamid II. Even though since the Berlin Congress Russia, and then Britain and even France made pressure on the Ottoman Empire for reforms in favour of the Armenians and supported the Armenians.<sup>16</sup> Even as Bogos Nubar Pasha was negotiating to realise the dream of Armenia, they were sharing the Ottoman lands among themselves including the regions promised to the Armenians with a secret agreement (Sykes-Picot agreement, 26 April 1916) during World War I.<sup>17</sup> Against the Armenians who joined the Russians and invaded Eastern Anatolia at the beginning of the World War I and who therefore got into treachery against its own state's army, the Ottoman government has issued warnings that in case of the continuation of this treason and subsequent disorder harsh measures were to be implemented, and these warnings were even delivered to the Armenian Patriarch. As a result of the continuation of the Armenian brigands' destructive and separatist activities, the Ottoman government issued a decree to 14 provincial governor's offices and 10 district officer's offices at the same time as the Dardanelles Campaign was going on, and asked for the break up of the Armenian political organisations which led to rebellions at different provinces, created voluntary regiments to support the Russian forces, and which therefore threatened the Ottoman army from behind; and in relation to these activities, demanding the closing of all the branches of Hinchak, Tashnak, and similar organisations and the arrest of the members of the committees as well as Armenians who disturbed peace. Upon this decree dated 24 April 1915, some 2,345 Armenians were arrested and as there were no changes in the position adopted by the Armenians, the government referred to relocation as a last move.<sup>18</sup>

It is necessary to analyse each period according to its conditions. If the historical developments are considered abstractly without taking events leading to them in the past, the relocation decision of the Ottomans may seem harsh; however, when the process is considered within the framework of the events described

16 On the support to the Armenians and the policies pursued by the Great Powers, see Gürbüz Evren, *Sömürgecilik Tarihi Işığında Ermeni Sorunundaki Çıkar Odakları*, (Ankara: 2002).

17 For the Sykes-Picot Agreement, see Yuluğ Tekin Kurat, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun Paylaşılması*, (Ankara: 1976); E.A. Adamov, *Sovyet Devlet Arşivi Gizli Belgelerinde Anadolu'nun Taksimi Planı*, Trans. by, R.Apak, (İstanbul: 1972).

18 For the activities of the Armenians before and during World War I, see Bilal Şimşir, *İngiliz Belgelerinde Osmanlı Ermenileri*, (Ankara: 1986); C.B. Norman, *The Armenians Unmasked (Ermenilerin Maskesi Düşüyor)* (ed. by) Yavuz Ercan, (Ankara: Ankara: 1993); Esat Uras, *Tarihte Ermeniler ve Ermeni Meselesi*, (İstanbul: 1987); Yusuf Hikmet Bayur, *Türk İnkılabı Tarihi*, C. III, (Ankara: 1983); Laurence Evans, *Türkiye'nin Paylaşılması 1914-1924*, (İstanbul: 1972); Kamuran Gürün, *Ermeni Dosyası*, (Ankara: 1983).

above, one can see how justifiable the decision actually is. Besides, the Ottoman Empire had not much choice, either: It was either to deport the Armenians or send them to a remote region. In fact, possibly the kindest decision available within the conditions of the day was taken and on 27 May 1915 the “Dispatch and Lodging Law” was adopted.<sup>19</sup> The reasons for the taking of this decision which was contemplated as provisional were: The Armenians living at regions near the war zones hinder the movements of the Turkish armed forces; harden the logistical support to the soldiers; share the same goals and collaborate with the enemy; attack the troops and innocent civilians within the country’s boundaries; and show the fortified regions to the enemy forces.

The decision of relocation was not put into operation for all the Armenians living in Ottoman lands, but to those living in certain cities in East and Central Anatolia. The Armenians made to migrate from these places were not deported to a different country but were relocated to Syria, Lebanon, and Northern Iraq, which were still Ottoman soil. In addition, after the decision of relocation, the Ottoman administration demanded that the Armenians and their belongings were to be kept secure during transportation, their needs should be met, and they should be helped to settle down when they arrived to their expected destinations. As can be understood from archive documents, those who acted against regulations and those who attacked the Armenians were identified and then punished. The number of those punished, including the cases of capital punishment, is 1,397. For instance, 32 from the province of Ankara, 27 from the province of Syria, 189 from the province of Urfa were sentenced with different punishments.<sup>20</sup> On 31 December 1918, after the end of World War I, the government issued a decree allowing those Armenians wishing to return to their former lands to do so, and many Armenians returned to their previous homes. Nonetheless, those Armenians who had collaborated with the French forces during the war carried on with their attacks on local people forming military troops and militia in Antep, Maraş, and Adana.<sup>21</sup> Those who were back from relocation were given their former belongings and were compensated.

To conclude, both sides had suffered great losses; that is an experienced reality and cannot be denied. Even Talat Pasha who was held responsible for the Reloca-

19 Yusuf Hikmet Bayur, *Türk İnkılabı Tarihi*, cilt III, s. 37-38; On 27 May 1915 a law for relocation called “Vakt-i Seferde İcraat-ı Hükümete Karşı Gelenler için Cihet-i Askeriyece İttihaz Olunacak Tedabir Hakkında” was issued.

20 Azmi Süslü, *op. cit.*; s. 147; Ahmet Rüstem Bey, *Cihan Harbi ve Türk-Ermeni Meselesi*, (İstanbul: 2001), s. 63.

21 Kemal Çelik, *Milli Mücadele’de Adana ve Havalisi (1918-1922)*, (Ankara: 1999), s. 68-71.

tion decision had written in his memoirs that the events of 1915 have “turned into a disaster in the hands of people without conscience”.<sup>22</sup> However, what happened then is not a systematic, preconceived genocide, and nor the number of those who perished is anywhere near 1,200,000 as claimed.

The Genocide Convention was accepted on 9 December 1948 and entered into force in 1951. According to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Article of this convention, genocide has to have *intent* to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group. There are those who categorise the events of 1915 in par with the Jewish Holocaust committed by the Nazis. However, it is known that there was no racial hatred towards the Armenians in the Ottoman Empire. When compared to the Armenians, the Jews of Germany have not fought for their independence from Germany, have not referred to terror and violence, have not asked for land, have not cooperated with Germany’s opponents in war and betrayed German forces, have not hindered the logistical support routes, and have not murdered German civilians through their terrorist organisations. They were killed just because they were Jewish, in a pre-meditated, well-organised effective manner, systematically and on a personal basis.<sup>23</sup> Hitler rose to power with a programme based on pan-German views and which was completely anti-Semitic. “Holocaust” is a result of this programme. On the other hand, the Party of Union and Progress came to power embracing the Armenians, and never developed an anti-Armenian doctrine even if they turned to Turkism in time.<sup>24</sup> In the wake of the Mudros Armistice of 30 October 1918, the British who wanted to punish war criminals had arrested and exiled some 150 people including some high-rank officials to Malta, and had the Sevres Peace Treaty have the remark “The Turkish Government undertakes to hand over to the Allied Powers the persons whose surrender may be required by the latter as being responsible for the massacres committed during the state of war on territory which formed part of the Turkish Empire on August 1, 1914.” in Article 230. The British who fastidiously tracked the witnesses and documents to condemn those arrested, despite their elaborate search of the American archives as well, could not find any solid, clear, and convincing evidence to show a genocide.<sup>25</sup>

The 30 October 1918 the Armistice of Mudros enabled the occupation of Ottoman lands by the Entente powers. The words “vilayet-i sitte” (“six provinces”)

22 Talat Paşa’nın Anıları, İstanbul, 1946, s. 74-75, aktaran, Taner Timur, *Türkler ve Ermeniler*, (Ankara: İmge Yayınları, 2001).

23 Gündüz Aktan, “Hukukta Soykırım ve Ermeni Meselesi”, (*Görüş Dergisi*, Ağustos-Eylül 2001), s. 37.

24 Taner Timur, *1915 ve Sonrası Türkler ve Ermeniler*, (Ankara: 2001), s. 101.

25 Bilal Şimşir, *Malta Sürgünleri*, (İstanbul: 1976), s. 230-231.

mentioned in the 24<sup>th</sup> Article of the agreement enabled the necessary medium for the establishment of Armenia.<sup>26</sup> Bogos Nubar Pasha, heartened by this article, applied to the Entente Powers and asked for the establishment of an independent Armenia and that this independent state is protected under Entente Powers.<sup>27</sup> Nubar Pasha's attempts came to fruition with the Sevres Peace Treaty and Articles 88, 89, and 93 of the treaty established the roots of Greater Armenia.<sup>28</sup> However, the Ankara government took back the lands lost with the Sevres Treaty with the 3 December 1920 Gümrü Treaty. In spite of this agreement, the Armenian problem was not solved. The Sovietisation of Armenia on 5 December 1920 led to the continuation of the problem between Soviet Union and Turkey for a while more. The problem was finally solved by the 16 March 1921 Ankara and 13 October 1921 Kars Agreements.<sup>29</sup> By the time of the Lausanne Treaty, there was no more an "Armenian problem". That is the truth, but those who wanted to refuse this truth, became active from 1970s on and where in public display with the activities of Armenian terrorist organisations.

Beginning with the Santa Barbara assassination of 1973, in 27 attacks, more than thirty Turkish diplomats and their families were systematically murdered. These assassinations were claimed by the terrorist organisations "Armenian Secret Army for Liberation of Armenia" (ASALA) and the "Armenian Genocide Commandos". These organisations which claimed there was a genocide in 1915 against the Armenians, were after making Turkey and the global public opinion accept their claim, ask for reparations, and to create an "Armenian State" in Eastern Anatolia.<sup>30</sup> Turkey, despite all these sufferings it had in recent years, had accepted Armenian independence without any conditions.

In history, the Armenian question has been a tool of pressure against the Ottoman State and it is proven that there is no scientific basis for the genocide claims legislated in some parliaments. What is attempted today is reminiscent of the pressure diplomacy from 1878 to 1914. These attempts are to be understood as a reliving of history, which only serves to encouraging the Armenians to deny existing borders and ask for new territory.

26 Erdal İter, "Ermeni İstekleri Karşısında Milli Teşekküllerin Tutumu (1919-1922)", *Ankara Üniversitesi Türk İnkılap Tarihi Enstitüsü Dergisi*, Mayıs-Kasım 2001, yıl: 14, sayı 27, s. 301.

27 Esat Uras, *Tarihte Ermeniler ve Ermeni Meselesi*, (Ankara: 1950), s. 672.

28 For relevant articles of the Sevres Treaty, see Nihar Erim, *Devletlerarası Hukuku ve Siyasi Tarih Metinleri: Osmanlı İmparatorluğu Anlaşmaları*, Vol. I, (Ankara: 1953), pp. 559-560.

29 For Moscow and Kars treaties see İsmail Soysal, *Tarihçeleri ve Açıklamaları ile Birlikte Türkiye'nin Siyasal Anlaşmaları, 1920-1945*, Cilt I, (Ankara: 1983), s. 27-47.

30 Bilal Şimşir, "Ermeni Terörü Kurbanı Şehit Türk diplomatları", *Uluslararası Türk-Ermeni İlişkileri Sempozyumu*, 24-25 Mayıs 2001, (İstanbul: 2001). s. 359-372.

# ON THE REASONS OF THE GERMAN FEDERAL PARLIAMENT'S RECOGNITION OF THE SO- CALLED ARMENIAN GENOCIDE AND THE ROLE OF POLITICAL PROTESTANTISM

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## **Abstract:**

This article analyzes the factors that resulted in the recognition of the Armenian genocide allegations by the German Parliament. Accordingly, German attempts to divert attention from Holocaust to another genocide, the situation of Turkish-originated German citizens, the German attempt to block Turkish accession to the European Union, and the pressure that was engendered by the recognition of Armenian genocide allegations in the parliaments of some other European countries forced German Parliament to adopt such a resolution. The second part of the article, on the other hand, mainly deals with the impact of the Protestant Church on this governmental process. It tries to unfold the connection between German political actors and the religious establishments.

**Key Words:** German Parliament, Armenian Genocide allegations, German Protestant Church (Evangelische Kirche Deutschlands – EKD), Conference of European Churches (Konferenz Europäischer Kirchen – KEK), Christian Democratic Union Parties (CDU/CSU)

## **Öz:**

Bu makalede Alman Parlamentosunun Ermeni soykırım iddialarını tanıyan bir karar almasının ardında yatan etmenler incelenmektedir. Bu çerçevede, Almanya'nın Yahudi Soykırımı suçunun getirdiği sorumluluğu paylaşma düşüncesi, Türk kökenli Alman vatandaşlarının durumu, Almanya'nın Türkiye'nin AB üyeliğini engelleme girişimleri ve bir çok Avrupa ülkesinin parlamentosunun Ermeni soykırım iddialarını tanıyan kararlar alması Almanya'yı da böyle bir karar almaya yönlendirmiştir. Makalenin ikinci bölümünde ise Protestan Kilisesi'nin bu siyasi süreç içindeki rolü incelenmektedir. Makale Alman siyasi aktörleri ile dini kurumları arasındaki bağı da gün yüzüne çıkarmayı amaçlamaktadır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Alman Parlamentosu, Ermeni Soykırımını iddiaları, Alman Protestan Kilisesi (Evangelische Kirche Deutschlands – EKD), Avrupa Kiliseleri Konferansı (Konferenz Europäischer Kirchen – KEK), Hıristiyan Demokratik Birlik Partileri (CDU/CSU)

## INTRODUCTION

There are two dominant contradictory theses regarding the Armenian question in the world public opinion as well as in Turkey. One of them is the allegation, which has been disseminated by the activities of the Armenian lobbies and imposed on both governmental actors and societies, stating that the Ottoman administration have exercised an intentional and systematic “genocide” over Armenians in 1915. Whereas, the alternative thesis has never been mentioned by the Armenian and the Western sources and it is mainly based upon the ‘relocation’ as a precaution in order to guarantee the maneuver space of the Ottoman army during World War I and to block the mutual atrocities, as a result of which hundred thousands of Muslims were being massacred by the Armenians.<sup>1</sup>

Accordingly, from German Federal Parliament has recently passed a resolution titled as “The Recalling and the Commemoration of the 1915 Armenian Deportation and Massacres: Germany Should Contribute to The Reconciliation Between Armenia and Turkey” at approximately the fortieth anniversary of the Turkish Republic’s application for the full membership to the European Communities and the 90th anniversary of the so-called Armenian Genocide.<sup>2</sup>

Actually, there were much more favorable conditions for Turkey five years ago. The signature campaign called “It is time to doom Genocide!” was submitted to the German Federal Parliament on April 2000 and was oriented to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs by the Parliament’s Petition Commission, with the clause “It is better to remedy the sufferings than to recall them”<sup>3</sup> in 2001. This orientation

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1 Yusuf Halaçoğlu, *Sürgünden Soykırıma Ermeni İddiaları*, (İstanbul: 2006); Yusuf Halaçoğlu, *Ermeni Tehciri ve Gerçekler, 1914-1918*, (Ankara: 2001); Justin McCarthy, *Death and Exile, The Ethnic Cleansing of Ottoman Turks, 1821-1922*, (Princeton: 1995); Justin McCarthy, *The Ottoman Turks*, (London: 1998); Şahin Ali Söylemezoğlu, *Die andere Seite der Medaille* [The Other Side of The Medal], (Köln: 2005); Cem Özgönül, *Der Mythos eines Völkermordes* [The Myth of a Genocide], (Köln: 2006).

2 Ömer E. Lütem, ‘Facts and Comments’, (*Review of Armenian Studies*, Vol. 2, No. 7-8, 2005), pp. 5-49; Bundestagsdrucksache 15/5689, 15 June 2005.

3 Schaeffgen, ‘Der Völkermord an den Armeniern in der deutschen Politik nach 1949’ [The Armenian Genocide in German Diplomacy after 1949], within it Hans-Lukas Kieser ve Dominik J. Schaller (eds.), *Der Völkermord an den Armeniern und die Shoah* [The Armenian Genocide and the Shoah], (Zürich: 2002), p. 565.

proposal was approved. The press declaration of the Petition Commission, dated 10 October 2001, stated that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had dealt with this issue on June 2001 and it was pointed out that the civil society organizations on the Turkish side had started to handle the common history between the Armenians and the Turks unofficially.<sup>4</sup> The Commission has confined the subject in such a way.<sup>5</sup>

The question whether the Parliament would recognize 1915-1916 events as genocide by the German Democratic Socialist Party (PDS) was submitted to the Federal Government before the Petition Commission oriented the aforementioned proposal to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Ministry replied this question by stipulating that "...the interpretation of Armenian Genocide ... is a historical question. Thus, this affair is a subject of history and it is related with Armenia and Turkey first and foremost with this respect"<sup>6</sup>.

Another question with a similar content was also replied by the Foreign Minister on September 2002 as "First of all, evaluating the past is an issue between Armenia and Turkey ... The Federal Government welcomes all of the initiatives that serve for the treatment of the upsetting events between 1915 and 1917. The outcomes of these investigations should be interpreted by the lawyers and the historians. But the necessity to remedy old sufferings instead of recalling them should be cared"<sup>7</sup>.

One of the Member of Parliaments of the Christian Union Parties, Erwin Marschewski's question regarding the attitude of the Federal German Government about the Armenian allegations and whether Germany would spotlight these allegations during Turkey's negotiations with the EU was replied similarly on 29 December 2004.<sup>8</sup>

Why have the critical approaches of the authors supporting the Armenian

4 *Ibid.* p. 574, footnote 46.

5 *Ibid.* p. 566-567.

6 *Ibid.* p. 566, p. 574, footnote 43.

7 Bundestagsdrucksache 14/9921, 3 September 2002; Seyhan Bayraktar ve Wolfgang Seibel, 'Das türkische Tätertrauma, Der Massenmord an den Armeniern von 1915 bis 1917 und seine Leugnung' [The Trauma of the Turkish Perpetrators, The Armenian Collective Genocide in Between 1915 and 1917 and Its Denial], in Bernhard Giesen ve Christoph Schneider (eds.), *Tätertrauma* [The Trauma of The Perpetrators], (Konstanz: 2004), p. 385.

8 Bundestagsdrucksache 15/4627, 7 January 2005.



allegations and Germany's 'smooth' attitude<sup>9</sup> towards Turkey regarding the so-called Armenian Genocide as a reason for their investigations changed suddenly in 2005, although a new "evidence" or a "document" proving "the crime of accused" has not been discovered? Why has the Parliament of Germany, where two and a half million of Turks live and no powerful Armenian lobby exists unlike France and the USA, has passed a resolution that may frustrate its relations with Turkey?

There are various factors that have affected the decision of the German Federal Parliament:

- a) The moderation of the bad image of Germany caused by the Holocaust
- b) The problem of the foreigners and the Turks
- c) The blocking of the EU process and that of the future power of Turkey as a potential member of the Union
- d) The pressure of the 90th anniversary of the so-called genocide
- e) The impact of the Protestant churches on the German policy

### **I. THE MODERATION OF THE RESPONSIBILITY CAUSED BY THE HOLOCAUST**

The collective crime perception of the Germans, which is an outcome of the systematic, planned and the rationally organized Holocaust in Europe during the Nazi Regime, has resulted in the embarrassment within German society as well as hatred against their own history and nation. The reality of the Holocaust has been kept alive in the current agenda of Germany through scientific studies, series, museums, debates, compensation allegations, exhibitions, movies, books, investigations, etc. Indeed, Germany has been defeated during World War II, occupied for a long time, disintegrated and has limited political action capability because of its "special historical past" and this is stored by the social memories of the Germans by causing deep psychological impacts on them. The reality of the

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9 Schaeffgen, *Der Völkermord ...., op.cit.*, pp. 557-576; Seyhan Bayraktar ve Wolfgang Seibel, *Das türkische Tätertrauma ...., op. cit.*, s. 383-386; Wolfgang Benz, 'Der Völkermord an den Armeniern: Zum 90. Gedenktag am 24. April 2005' [Armenian Genocide, about its 90th Anniversary on 24 April 2005], (*Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft*, Vol. 53, No. 4, 2005, pp. 293-300), p. 300; Marcus Schladebach, 'Der türkische Völkermord an den Armeniern: Aktuelle Fragen aus europäischer Perspektive' [The Genocide Exercised by Turks over Armenians: Current Problems from Europe's Point of View], *Südosteuropa*, Vol. 53, No. 1, 2005, pp. 96-108), p. 101

Holocaust has been so much adopted, imposed and internalized within the German society and the state that the extreme right wing and the Nazis denying this reality because of a social and a legal reflex are called as "The Holocaust Deniers" and are repressed by sanctions such as imprisonment. According to Bernhard Giesen, who made investigations about the nations that have been exposed to genocide and about "the trauma of the perpetrator" in successor generations, Holocaust makes up "the traumatic substance of the German identity".<sup>10</sup>

After the end of the Cold War, Federal Germany, who has united with East Germany in order to be a focus of power within the process of European integration and world politics, searched for a "partner of crime" in order to moderate its responsibility. Therefore, German aim to reduce the role of the massive Holocaust is an indirect reason of the recognition of the Armenian allegations. According to İlber Ortaylı, hereafter the Germans "search for their historical partners to share their ... genuine crimes."<sup>11</sup> This is why Armenian genocide allegations are valued and it is -at least- implied that the Nazis were impressed by the Young Turks.

According to Tessa Hoffman, who is one of the ardent supporters of the Armenian allegations, the pre-adoption of some of the methods during the so-called Armenian genocide before the Jewish Holocaust, such as forcing people work till death, the transportation of the Armenians to the camps on train, the vaccination of the typhus virus to the Armenians, the existence of the gas baths in Trabzon as prototype of the Nazis' gas rooms, Hitler's being informed by the consul of Germany in Erzurum and of course the infamous quotation of Hitler "Who is already talking about the Armenian eradication today?" during his plan about the Holocaust are the prior arguments of her thesis. By this way, Hoffman tries to moderate the responsibility of the Holocaust on Germans.<sup>12</sup> Although there is not a direct relation between the so-called Armenian Genocide and the Holocaust, the Turks are blamed for being the instructors of the Germans via comparison.

Another academician named Hans-Lukas Kieser, who has prejudicial views about the Turks and Turkey regarding the Armenian, the Kurdish and the Alawite

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10 Bernhard Giesen, *Das Tätertrauma der Deutschen* [The Trauma of German Perpetrators], in Bernhard Giesen e Christoph Schneider, *Tätertrauma ...., op.cit.*, p. 47.

11 İlber Ortaylı, 'Ermeni Sorunu: Soykırım İddialarının Arkasındaki Gerçekler', (*Popüler Tarih*, Vol. 8, 2001, pp.42-46), p.44.

12 Tessa Hoffmann, 'Verfolgung und Völkermord. Armenien zwischen 1877 und 1922' [Cruelty and Genocide. Armenia between 1877 and 1922], in Tessa Hoffmann, *Armenier und Armenien – Heimat und Exil* [Armenians and Armenia, Motherland and Deportation], (Hamburg: 1994), p. 28, pp. 15-32.

questions<sup>13</sup>, has compiled and published several articles with the claim that there were significant similarities between the so-called Armenian Genocide and the Holocaust.<sup>14</sup>

Seyhan Bayraktar and Wolfgang Seibel express their critical attitudes by adapting the smooth answer of the German Federal Government on September 2002 to the Holocaust in the following way<sup>15</sup>:

“First of all, treating the past is a subject between Israel and Germany... The Federal Government approves whole initiatives that serve for the treatment of the upsetting events between 1933 and 1945. The outcomes of these investigations should be interpreted by the lawyers and the historians. But the necessity to remedy sufferings instead of recalling them should be cared. It can be questioned whether this calming attitude of the Federal Government about the Armenian Genocide is less shameful [“skandalös” BG] or not.”

According to Gündüz Aktan, the aim of the moderation of the responsibility of Holocaust is also reflected in the decree of the German Parliament<sup>16</sup> :

“It is demanded that ‘The history of the Armenian sufferings should be treated together with the history of the ethnic arguments in Germany during 20th century’ in one part of the resolution. By this way, the attitude shaped by the anticipation that the Armenian case should be viewed within the framework of the Holocaust, is mentioned in an official text for the first time. In the text, the allegation that Armenian genocide have been applied by the aid of ‘death walks’, ‘camps’ and ‘special forces’ shows that the Armenian case is compared by the Holocaust. Thus, the concept of genocide is spoilt in order to moderate the remorse of Germany.”

The decree emphasizing that the history should be treated honestly and that it is the most important source of the peace and pointing out that this issue is valid especially in the framework of European Commemoration culture and that confronting with the dark side of the history apparently seems to be written in order to convince the Germans, who do not recognize the Holocaust, with the

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13 Hans-Lukas Kieser, *Der verpasste Friede. Mission, Ethnie und Staat in den Ostprovinzen der Türkei 1839-1938* [The Missed Peace, the Missionaries in Eastern Provinces, Ethnic Identity ve State 1839-1938] (Zürich: 2000).

14 Hans-Lukas Kieser ve Dominik J.Schaller (eds.), *Der Völkermord...*, *op. cit.*.

15 Seyhan Bayraktar ve Wolfgang Seibel, ‘Das türkische Tätertrauma ....’, *op.cit.* p. 385.

16 <http://www.radikal.com.tr/haber.php?haberno=145565>, the last date of the accession 10.2.2006.

prior acceptance of a collective agreement about the Armenian relocation, which is seen as genocide by almost the whole world public opinion except Turkey.<sup>17</sup> By this way, it is proved that Germany, composed of “historical perpetrators society”, believes that it has the right to teach every state and nation this moral issue by the inspiration of its own specific historical past<sup>18</sup>.

## II. THE PROBLEM OF THE FOREIGNERS AND THE TURKS

As a result of unemployment, end of the Cold War, selfishness caused by the European unity and especially as a result of the 11 September attacks, the foreigner has been made “the other” and “the marginal” in Germany. During this period, when antagonism towards the Turks and the Muslims increased, Germany aimed to dominate two and a half million (Muslim) Turks living there. Another aim of Germany, where German population decreases gradually, is to block Turkish lobbies that have the potential to be a serious political factor instead of only functioning as a bridge between Turkey and Germany<sup>19</sup>.

Every state wants to dominate the people living within its territories. This primary desire is also valid for Germany. According to Canan Atılgan, who made some interviews with the German politicians, the devotion and the commitment of the Turks to the Germans are said to be desired. According to a document, the main reason why the members of Niedersachsen Province Group, which is connected with the Christian Democratic Union in the Federal Parliament, objects to the double citizenship is that the anxiety about whether the Turkish-German citizens would demand minority rights from the Federal Constitutional Court and found an ethnic minority party that can participate in the Federal and the Province Assemblies easily by being exempted from five percent threshold application.<sup>20</sup> Some of the politicians advocate that the Turks are a separate soci-

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17 Bundestagsdrucksache 15/5689, 15 June 2005.

18 “The specific historical past” (“besondere deutsche Vergangenheit”) of Germany which limited its international field of action in the past is used as a valid tool today for the contribution of the Federal German Republic for the protection of “The World Peace and The Human Rights”. German’s contribution to Kosovo, Bosnia and Afghanistan interventions are shown as legitimate under the title of “the special responsibility of Germany”. Thus, Seyhan Bayraktar and Wolfgang Siebel criticize Germany since it does not generate a hard attitude against Turkey regarding the so-called Armenian Genocide because of the governmental opportunism despite Germany’s “learning from the past”. Seyhan Bayraktar ve Wolfgang Siebel, *Das türkische Tätertrauma...*, *op.cit.*, p. 384.

19 Meinhard Miegel, *Die deformierte Gesellschaft* [The Deformed Society], (Münich: 2002).

20 Canan Atılgan, *Türkische Diaspora in Deutschland* [Turkish Diaspora in Deutschland], (Hamburg: 2002), p. 96.

ety which has to be kept under control within the German society.<sup>21</sup> Even the Minister of Internal Affairs Otto Schilly is bothered by the homogenous and the national Turkish minority in Germany.<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, Turkish associations are identified as ethnically opportunist organizations by the German politicians that endanger the societal peace.<sup>23</sup> Maybe this is why the dividing, communal, religious and the destructive associations that are against the Turkish national identity are welcomed in Germany.

Within the article named 'Islam and Nationalism in Turkey' published in the 'The Protestant Responsibility' (*Evangelische Verantwortung*), which is an operational branch of the Christian Democratic Union's Protestant Motion Group EAK (*Evangelischer Arbeitskreis der CDU/CSU*), Turkey's EU membership, the Turkish (National) Identity and the Turks in Germany are mentioned<sup>24</sup>:

"The process of integration of an Islamic Asian country with an approximately 90 million population due to its high demographic growth percentage and which has not have resolved its crises completely, to the EU should be watched carefully."

The basis of this point of view is the Turkish-Islam conception and the authenticity of the Turkish identity<sup>25</sup>:

"Turkish identity is composed of three elements: the ethnic [national] consciousness,... nationalism and the Sunni Islam. Turkey is different from the Arabic countries because of its differently designed relationship between its religion and nationalism. There [in Arabic countries] Islam... fights against the (weak) nationalism. But the strong Turkish nationalism uses and even nationalizes the Islam itself."

Accordingly, the Turks are said to oppress the "other" groups: "Armenians, Greeks, Kurds and Alawites, ... oppression on them is caused by the Turks' nationalist-religious dominancy feeling."<sup>26</sup> According to the writer, it is not rational to adopt the state of the Turks as a member of the EU as the conception of their

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21 *Ibid.*, p.97.

22 Cumhuriyet, 'Yeni Bir "Leitkultur" Kahramanı', 3.7.2002, p.6

23 Canan Atılğan, *Türkische Diaspora...., op. cit.*, p. 100.

24 Rainer Glagow, 'Islam und Nationalismus in der Türkei' [Islam and Nationality in Turkey], (*Evangelische Verantwortung*, December 2005/January 2006, pp. 6-15), p.6.

25 *Ibid.*, p. 9.

26 *Ibid.* p. 10.

nationalism and the Islam ought to be seen as fearful. There exists the danger of 'the parallel groups dominated by the Turks' at the center of Europe.<sup>27</sup> As an outcome, Turkey must be kept out of the EU and this strong consciousness of Turkishness needs to be kept out of the way. The aim is to create a typecasting without its historical, linguistic, genuine religious conception and national identity, actually an assimilated one. One of the instruments to reach this aim is the "German-Islam" project and the other one is the Armenian question.

The Turks living in Germany and functioning as a bridge between Germany and Turkey, to where they belong spiritually, are requested to be "German citizens with the Islamic faith"<sup>28</sup> according to Udo Steinbach who is the head of the German Orientals Institute. Accordingly, German schools in the provinces of Germany have started to teach Islam courses in German. By this way the courses, which contribute to the mental development of the Turks and their belongingness to Turkish national history, language, shortly the Turkish national identity, such as Turkish, Social Sciences and The Culture of Religion and Ethics laid down formerly by the Turkish Ministry of National Education to be instructed besides religion courses of the German Christians up to now, are under the threat of refinement. Furthermore, the Religious Affairs Turkish-Islam Union and the Kemalist associations, which are perceived as 'governmentalist' and sensitive about the Turkish national identity, are ignored in Germany. Despite the objections of Turkey and the Turks in Germany, the liberal Islamic Kemalist and the largest Muslim association, the Religious Affairs Turkish-Islam Union, which has been blamed for imposing a false and a nationalist 'Governmental Islam', is accused of blocking the integration by Udo Steinbach<sup>29</sup>:

"Well, what kind of an ideology do teachers sent here by the Turkish state bring with themselves? This is not an integration ideology, instead, is the one blocking the integration... Well, then who impedes the arguments on the Islamic religion courses in Germany? The ones belonging to the Religious Affairs Turkish-Islam Union, which wants to see Turkey's official Islam here. However one of the functions of the Turkish Islam, on the other side, is to strengthen the Turkish identity via Islam... Let's found forums and institutions together with the immigrants who are Muslim-German citizens living here... We need to get rid of a

27 *Ibid.*, p. 12.

28 Udo Steinbach, 'Muslime in Deutschland' [Muslims in Germany], (*Hirschberger Monatszeitschrift des Bundes Neudeutschland* , Vol. 51, No. 10, 1998, pp. 695-702); Udo Steinbach, 'Muslime in Deutschland' [Muslims in Germany], in Tillman Hannemann ve Peter Meier-Hüsing (eds.), *Deutscher Islam – Islam in Deutschland* [German Islam – Islam in Germany], (Marburg: 2000).

29 Körber Vakfi, *Türk-Alman Diyaloguna Katkılar*, (Hamburg: 2002), pp. 379-380.

prejudice. According to this prejudice, the secular Kemalist Turks are nice and the religious ones are bad.”

Probably, this is why the Turks are called as “Muslim immigrants” within the German media and the public opinion. Even Lale Akgün, who is the Member of German Parliament, is identified as the “Muslim SPD woman politician”<sup>30</sup> in the magazine news. Hereafter, the situation of the Turks in Germany is treated by the clauses such as “German Islam – Islam in Germany”<sup>31</sup>, “Muslims in Germany”<sup>32</sup>, “The Islamic Immigration”<sup>33</sup>, “The way to the Euro-Islam?”<sup>34</sup>

Another way other than the German-Islam synthesis to integrate the Turks, who need to be dominated, is to make the Germans and the Turks in Germany admit the reality of the so-called Armenian Genocide. The resolution of the Federal Parliament states that the ‘Turkish Muslims’ in Germany should remember the history thus they should recognize the Armenian allegations.<sup>35</sup> Accordingly, the Turks, who are identified as the ‘Turkish Muslims’, are requested to be ashamed of their own history, nation and the state, which in turn would make them adopt themselves to the German society more easily.

Besides, this resolution recommending the German Federal Government to include the “deportation and destruction of the Armenians” within the educational policies of the provinces is able to cause disturbance between the Germans and the Turks. This disturbance, that causes personal confrontations among the German students and the teachers and the Turks at schools about the vulnerable topics such as Cyprus, Southeastern Anatolia, Islam and the Armenian question, has already been institutionalized systematically by the recommendations towards regional and provincial education mechanisms.

Furthermore, the advocates of the Armenian allegations benefit from the Germans’ sensitivity about the Holocaust by comparing it with the so-called Armenian Genocide. These authors make use of the existing reflex of the conditioned

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30 Der Spiegel, ‘Der Kopftuchstreit und die schwierige Integration der Muslime’, No. 40, 29.9.2003, pp. 82-97, p. 88

31 Tillman Hannemann ve Peter Meier-Hüsing (eds.), *Deutscher Islam.....*, *op.cit.*.

32 Udo Steinbach, ‘Muslime in Deutschland’, *op. cit.*.

33 Bassam Tibi, *Islamische Zuwanderung. Die gescheiterte Integration* [The Islamic Immigration. Unsuccessful Integration], (Stuttgart 2002).

34 Claus Leggewie, *Auf dem Weg zum Euro-Islam? Moscheen und Muslime in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland* [Is euro way to the Islam? The Muslims and The Mosques in The Federal German Republic], (Bad Homburg 2002).

35 Bundestagsdrucksache 15/5689, 15 June 2005.

German society towards the “Holocaust Deniers” as a tool against the people and the institutions that apparently reject the unfounded Armenian allegations and that advocate the Turkish thesis. The already-conditioned German public opinion with opposite views against the Turks on Cyprus and Southeastern Anatolia questions<sup>36</sup>, believes that Turkey is also wrong in this matter. The associations that declare their own views regarding the Armenian question are blamed for being “denier” in the presence of the German society. Besides this, the Turkish university student associations or other civil society institutions (local, regional or federal), that want to declare their views to the Parliament or to the public opinion and invite researchers for this purpose, are either ignored or blamed for being “denier” as well. The university students associations, that invite the supporters of the Turkish thesis to the panels, are under a sort of societal and psychological oppression even if what they do is not legally a crime. The Faculty Council Assembly (Fachschaftsratetag – FSRT), that does not have a judicial status in German universities and is not allowed to intervene in governmental issues, has requested the Konstanz Turkish Students Association (KOTÖD) to apologize for inviting the Erich Feigel, who was called as ‘genocide denier’.<sup>37</sup> Similarly, KOTÖD authorities have been blamed for not integrating themselves to the German society because of their different and radical Turkish history conceptions. The German *Südkurier* newspaper informing about the meeting has published doubtful news in its headline entitled ‘*Integration mit dem Handwerkzeug der Leugner*’ (‘Integration with the deniers’ methods’, 25.6.2005).

The possibility that the recognition of the so-called Armenian Genocide would result in some problems among the Turks and the Germans in Germany has not been missed by some of the supporters of the Armenian theses either; but it has been claimed that there have also existed the Turks against the “official” Turkish thesis and that they have been under the threat to be marked as ‘traitors’, thus, it has been requested that their field of action should have been cleared<sup>38</sup>:

“It should be treated naturally that the number of the ones supporting the “genocide” thesis especially among the German Turks with high education level has increased. Because of the objection to the dominant discourse it is impossible for them to have a place within the decision-making mechanisms. To put it in

36 Tamer Bacınoğlu ve Andrea Bacınoğlu, *Modern Alman Oryantalizmi*, (Ankara: 2001).

37 Regarding the Armenian issue, the attempts to oppress the Turkish associations are declared by the academicians to the pulic opinion with back up documents at a web page, <http://www.armenianquestion.org/page.php?modul=Article&cop=read&nid=286&rub=88>, the last day of the accession 10.2.2006.

38 Schaeffgen, *Der Völkermord ....*, *op.cit.*, p. 569.



another way, it is impossible for a Turk who questions the 'genocide' thesis to find a job within the media, governmental or the academic circles."<sup>39</sup>

### III. BLOCKING TURKISH ACCESSION TO THE EU AND ITS PROSPECTIVE POWER DERIVED FROM ITS MEMBERSHIP

If the issues such as Southeast Anatolia, Cyprus, minorities, Clergy School, Armenian genocide allegations and the requested compromises, that have been included in the current agenda during Turkey's coalescence with the European Union and the negotiation process, result in loss of the indivisible integrity and the achievements gained by the National War of Independence, Lausanne Peace Treaty, Cyprus Peace Operation and the Struggle Against Terror. Recognition of the so-called Armenian genocide means for encountering Armenians' compensation and territory demands from Turkey. That is why the possibility that Turkey might compromise about this issue is quite low. If that recognition demand becomes a condition for Turkey to be able to integrate into the EU, it might be difficult for her to join the Union. Thus, the Armenian question is spotlighted in the agenda<sup>40</sup>:

"In the 21<sup>st</sup> paragraph of the EU Brussels Final Act dated 16-17 December 2004, the resolution adopted by the European Parliament, dated 15 December 2004, is pointed out.... It has been stated in the European Parliament resolution that Turkey has not performed in accordance with the resolution dated 18 June 1987... In the recommendation of the European Parliament dated 18 June 1987 entitled 'Political Solution of the Armenian Problem', the Parliament identifies the events between 1915-1917 period as genocide by relying upon 1948 UN Convention and states that the non-recognition of the Armenian genocide by Turkey is an obstacle in front of her membership."

Besides these, the recognition of the genocide allegations by the French Parliament and the rejection of the EU Constitution during the referendum related to Turkish EU membership by the French electors on 29 May 2005 might result in the review of German foreign policy regarding Turkey. The French Minister of Internal Affairs Nicolas Sarkozy does not welcome Turkey's full membership.<sup>41</sup>

39 Tamer Bacınoğlu ve Andrea Bacınoğlu, *Modern Alman ...*, *op. cit.*, p.199.

40 Kamer Kasım, 'Avrupa Birliği Sürecinde Kıbrıs, Ermeni Sorunu Ve Azınlıklar', (*Avrasya Dosyası*, Vol. 11, No. 1, 2005, pp. 85-112), p. 101

41 Özlem Yeşilkaya, 'Challenges on the Path of Turkey's EU Membership', (*Turkish Policy Quarterly*, Vol. 4, No. 3, 2005, pp. 99-110), p.100

Germany would not act in a stark opposition to French foreign policy about both the EU and the Armenian Problem.<sup>42</sup>

In line with the increasing importance of Germany as a result of the collapse of the Eastern Bloc and enlarging European Union, Germany has been less dependent on Turkey strategically and the importance of pro-Turkish policies has been decreased. Therefore, it has not much been necessitated to advocate the interest of Turkey.<sup>43</sup> Accordingly, the resolution of the Federal Parliament has been approved but the phrase “genocide” has not been used because of already existing expressions such as “the destruction of the Armenians almost as a whole”, “eradication of the Armenians by deportation”<sup>44</sup>.

#### **IV. THE PRESSURE OF THE 90<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF THE SO-CALLED ARMENIAN GENOCIDE AND THE PSYCHOLOGICAL “PRESSURE” GENERATED BY THE SO-CALLED ARMENIAN GENOCIDE’S RECOGNITION BY SOME PARLIAMENT:**

The recalling of the so-called Armenian Genocide’s 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary by the Armenians and their allies via large-scaled activities, the symbolic number of ninety and the adopted resolutions that recognize the so-called Armenian genocide by the various parliaments within Europe and other continents have generated a positive atmosphere in Germany for the recognition of the unfounded Armenian allegations. The increase in the number of these regional and national parliamentary resolutions drives some parliaments of European countries, such as Germany, that does not want to be stand as minority, to recognize these allegations as legally valid.

#### **V. THE IMPACT OF THE PROTESTANT CHURCHES ON THE GERMAN SOCIETY AND THE GERMAN PARLIAMENT**

Many of the Christian Democrats, who submitted the proposal regarding the recognition of the so-called genocide to the German Parliament, are Protestant, and this is a significant indicator about the governmental impact of Protestantism. The proposal including the Armenian allegations submitted by CDU/CSU to the Parliament was written by the Protestant theologian and the Director of

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42 Hüseyin Bağcı, ‘German Realism vs. Turkish Naiveté’, <http://www.turkishweekly.net/news.php?id=13123>, 21 June 2005, the last of the accession 10.2.2006.

43 Ömer E. Lütem, ‘Facts and Comments’, *op. cit.*, p. 45.

44 Bundestagsdrucksache 15/5689, 15 June 2005.

the Halle Martin Luther University Archives, Prof. Dr. Hermann Goltz.<sup>45</sup> The Protestant Church is likely to influence the German society and the members of the Christian Union Parties, regarding the recognition of the so-called genocide by the German Parliament.

There exists cooperation between religion and politics despite the classical secularism in Germany. Churches are viewed as the factors of stabilization for democratic Germany after Nazism.<sup>46</sup> Several examples of that mutual cooperation are the existence of soldier-priests dependent on the church in the army, church representatives within the boards of non-private TV channels and rights of churches to declare their views about social and political issues.<sup>47</sup> Researcher Göttrik Wewer has complained about the lack of information and scientific knowledge on the impacts of churches on German politics.<sup>48</sup> Protestant churches in Germany are likely to influence the German Parliament and its members, who have attempted for the recognition of genocide allegations by the aid of holding activities in various issue-areas.

History of the Armenian question and pro-Armenian activities of Protestant churches are interlinked which each other. Protestant missionaries and churches have supported Armenian committees and have undertaken Protestantization activities in order to connect the Armenians to the West since 19<sup>th</sup> century in Anatolia. Among them, missionary German priests, who came to Anatolia from the German Empire within which the Protestant Prussia dominated, had a significant role. The most well known example is Johannes Lepsius. Dr. Johannes Lepsius, who has the priority among the names that the German lobbies hold on, is a Protestant German missionary trying to authenticate the so-called genocide without refraining from manipulating even his own reports and he is also mentioned respectfully in the proposal submitted to the Parliament.<sup>49</sup>

45 Cem Özgönül, *Der Mythos eines Völkermordes*, (Köln: 2006), p. 59-60.

46 Gerhard Besier, 'Die politische Rolle des Protestantismus in der Nachkriegszeit' [Political Role of the Protestantism in the Post-War Period], (*Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte*, Vol. 50, 2000, pp. 29-38)

47 Eberhard Stammer, 'Evangelische Kirche und Staat in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland seit 1945' [Protestant Church and State in Post-War Federal German Republic], in Georg Denzler (ed.), *Kirche und Staat auf Distanz* [Diverging Church and State], (Münih: 1977), pp.126-137.

48 Göttrik Wewer, 'Die großen Kirchen in unterschiedlichen politischen Systemen' [Big Churches Within Different Political Systems], in Heidrun Abromeit ve Göttrik Wewer (eds.), *Die Kirchen und die Politik* [Churches and Politics], (Opladen: 1989), p.71, pp. 49-87.

49 Cem Özgönül, *Der Mythos ...*, *op. cit.* ; Uwe Feigal who is an Armenian supporter has mentioned about the pro-Armenian activities of the Protestants in his own work. Uwe Feigal, *Das evangelische Deutschland und Armenien, Die Armenierhilfe deutscher evangelischer Christen seit dem Ende des 19. Jahrhunderts im Kontext der deutsch-türkischen Beziehungen* [Protestant Germany and Armenia: The contribution of Protestants to Armenians within the Framework of German-Turkish Relations ], (Göttingen: 1989)

As a well known and an accepted religious organization of state German Protestant Church (EKD-Evangelische Kirche Deutschlands) is the biggest umbrella organization of the Protestants who has various privileges with respect to tax and media. EDK's legislative organ called as *Synode*, has the right to decide on church decrees and to express the opinion of the Church about terrestrial and church related issues. EKD Commission (*Rat der EKD*) is the external representative institution and it is directed by Wolfgang Huber. *Synode* comes together with the EKD Commission in order to handle terrestrial and religious issues once a year.

The unfounded Armenian allegations have been spotlighted for three times on the third day of the 10<sup>th</sup> meeting in Magdeburg on 7-11 November 2004. In his speech entitled 'Peace and Faith', Huber criticized Turkey for rejecting the so-called Armenian genocide after he had mentioned the apology of Federal Minister Heidemarie Wiecek-Zeul from Namibia with the occasion of the Herero Genocide's 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary. He emphasized that rejection of genocide was an important obstacle in front of Turkey for joining the EU from the point of view of the Protestant Church and he demanded the EU Commission to accept the recognition of the so-called genocide also as a criterion after he had highlighted the necessity that negotiations between EU and Turkey should have been opened rather than resulting in full membership. Besides this, Huber claimed that non-Muslims in Turkey, especially Christian minorities among them, had limited religious freedom and he claimed that it would have been better for a privileged partnership between Turkey and the EU as supported by the CDU/CSU parties and stated that they viewed the negotiation decision of the EU critically.<sup>50</sup> As a matter of fact, Christian Democratic Union Parties reject the integration of Turkey into the EU with a full membership status and propose a 'privileged partnership' instead as well.

Synode member Priest Hempel, who made a speech in the meeting and expressed that he had joined a voyage to Armenia, emphasized that Turkey's rejection of the so-called genocide should have been viewed as an obstacle in front of her aim to join the EU and that he had supported a resolution in accordance with the necessity that the EU Commission should have focused on this issue. Furthermore, Hempel claimed that he had 'realized' that the German witnesses knew about the so-called genocide but had to disguise that from the public opinion;

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50 Kirchenamt der Evangelischen Kirche in Deutschland (ed.), *Bericht über die dritte Tagung der zehnten Synode der Evangelischen Kirche in Deutschland vom 7. bis 11. November 2004* [The Third Day Meeting Report of The 10th Synode of The Protestant Church On 7-11 November 2004 ], Magdeburg 2004, Vol. 62, (Hannover: 2005), p. 27.

accordingly, he advocated that some regulations regarding this point should have been made either.<sup>51</sup> By this way, Hempel has mentioned about the Protestant missionary priest Johannes Lepsius who had identified himself as a “genocide witness” and he emphasized that the so-called genocide reality could not have been disseminated throughout the public opinion because of his being made silence. Before reaching the decision phase, *Synode* member Trösken claimed that the genocide allegations had been rejected in Germany and that the ones objecting this had encountered with some problems such as the prevention of the usage of Johannes Lepsius’ house in Berlin as a Commemoration and research center.<sup>52</sup> Seyhan Bayraktar and Wolfgang Seibel claim that the prevention of the usage of Lepsius’s house as a Commemoration and research center has resulted as a result of diplomatic attempts of Turkish Republic itself.<sup>53</sup> If this allegation is true then it can be derived that the Protestant Church desires to get over Turkish diplomacy by the aid of the public opinion.

During the EKD *Synode* meeting, in which the so-called Armenian genocide was also mentioned, two resolutions have been adopted<sup>54</sup>:

(1) EKD “Synode” meeting claimed that the negotiation between the EU and Turkey should have been open-ended, the conditions of the Christianity and other religions in Turkey had not been recovered, rights of minorities and “Kurdish community” had not been guaranteed essentially, women had been subjected to “honor murders”, regulative problems had existed despite of the reforms and that if Turkey did not question her historical past including the Armenian genocide honestly and apparently, a development based upon reconciliation, justice and peace would not be possible for her. The EDK Commission has been commissioned to follow up the negotiations between the EU and Turkey critically and to spotlight these issues. (2) “By the 14 numbered decree on the third day of the 10<sup>th</sup> Synode Conference of the German Protestant church regarding the Armenian genocide, the EKD Commission is requested to focus on the subject by the occasion of the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary and to declare its view by the EKD Synode”<sup>55</sup>

As the German Protestant Church does not have political power, Federal German Republic’s legislative and executive institutions are needed to function in

51 *Ibid.*, p. 34.

52 *Ibid.*, p. 148.

53 Seyhan Bayraktar ve Wolfgang Seibel, *Das türkische Tätertrauma....*, *op. cit.*, p. 383.

54 Kirchenamt der Evangelischen Kirche in Deutschland (ed.), *Bericht über die dritte*, *op. cit.*, p. 204.

55 *Ibid.*, p. 206.

order to realize these resolutions successfully. The EDK has held some activities for this purpose.

### **b. Direct Lobbying Activities of the EDK**

Within EDK, which frequently negotiates with the whole constitutional organs of the German government, which represents the Church in the EU, within which the common interests between the state and church are co-coordinated, there exists an official diplomatic connection (“*Verbindungsstelle*”) and an institution that function almost as a state bureau: “The Authority of the German Protestant Church Commission under the Guidance of the Federal German Republic and the European Union” (*Der Bevollmächtigte des Rates der Evangelischen Kirche in Deutschland bei der Bundesrepublik Deutschland und der Europäischen Union*). This authority titled as the “Pralat” is from the clergy class with a diplomatic mission. His mission is to inform EDK about political developments and represent the views and interests of EDK regarding current political affairs against the German and EU authorities. Furthermore, his mission is to provide members of the federal institutions with religious service. This authority is also in contact with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and ambassadors of other countries and it informs the Parliament, Federal Chancellor or the Federal President about resolutions and activities of the EDK.<sup>56</sup> Watching the legislation process is also under the responsibility of this Authority.<sup>57</sup> EDK representative is continuously in contact with the institutions mentioned in the German constitution.

The official collaboration regarding the Armenian question is possible institutionally between the German Parliament and the Protestant Church. Indeed, Hermann Gröhe, who is a member of the EDK Commission, is among the Protestant CDU/CSU members that submitted the aforementioned proposal.<sup>58</sup>

### **c. The Declarations of the EDK Regarding The Issue**

In one of his speeches, Wolfgang Huber claimed that Turkey's participation in the EU should not have been enforced and that rejection of the Armenian genocide lack of religious freedom for the Christians in Turkey should have been

56 <http://www.ekd.de/bevollmaechtigter/auftrag.html>; <http://www.ekd.de/bevollmaechtigter/auftrag.html>, the last date of the accession 10.2.2006.

57 <http://www.ekd.de/bevollmaechtigter/auftrag.html>, the last date of the accession 10.2.2006.

58 <http://www.hermann-groeh.de/zurperson>, the last date of the accession 10.2.2006.

viewed as obstacles on her way to Europe.<sup>59</sup>

On 21 and 23 April 2005, Christoff Vetter, who is the spokesman of the EDK Commission, has popularized two declarations regarding the recognition of the unfounded Armenian allegations to public opinion, one of which is titled as 'Remembering In Order To Reconciliate' (*Erinnern um der Versöhnung willen*)<sup>60</sup> and the other that mentions Huber's 'The Afterwards Apology Request' (*Nachtragliche Bitte um Verzeihung*) to be performed by Germany because of being a partner of the so-called Armenian Genocide.

Furthermore, the speech titled as "The 90<sup>th</sup> Commemoration Day Declaration of the KEK" (*KEK Stellungnahme der KEK aus Anlab des 90. Gedentages des Völkermords an dem armenischen Volk*) and dated as 6 April 2005 that of Jean-Arnold de Clermont, who is the President of European Church Conference (*Konferenz Europaischer Kirchen*); KEK) with which the EKD also co-operates, and the President of the French Protestant Churches Union, mentions the necessity of the recognition of the "genocide" by Turkey and of following up the negotiation with the EU carefully.<sup>61</sup>

#### **d. The Liturgy and The Commemoration Ceremonies of The EDK**

The glorious religious ceremony, in which Wolfgang Huber also participated and which was organized by EKD on 24 April at Berlin Dome Church for both Catholic and the Protestant Christians by the occasion of 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the so-called Armenian Genocide, was chaired by Huber himself.<sup>62</sup> The speech of Huber during the following phase of the commemoration ceremony includes similar expressions with respect to its style and content when compared to the decree accepted by the Parliament in accordance with the proposal of CDU/CSU on 16 June 2005, and to the proposal of the Christian Union Party that appealed the parliament in order to make the allegations recognized and it can be viewed as a clue about the existence of a common activity. As it has been asserted by the appeal of the parliamentarians of Christian Democratic Union and the decree

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59 Aschot Manutscharjan, 'Genozid an den...' [The Armenian Genocide In Turkey: It is consciously silenced in Germany regarding the genocide 90 years before], p.29, pp.27-30.

60 [http://www.ekd.de/presse/pm68\\_2005\\_ratserklaerung\\_armenier.html](http://www.ekd.de/presse/pm68_2005_ratserklaerung_armenier.html), the last date of the accession 10.2.06

61 [http://www.ekd.de/aktuell\\_presse/pm57\\_2005\\_kek\\_erklaerung\\_armenier.html](http://www.ekd.de/aktuell_presse/pm57_2005_kek_erklaerung_armenier.html), the last date of the accession 10.2.2006.

62 [http://www.ekd.de/aktuell\\_presse/pm57\\_2005\\_kek\\_erklaerung\\_armenier.html](http://www.ekd.de/aktuell_presse/pm57_2005_kek_erklaerung_armenier.html), the last date of the accession 10.2.2006.

of the Federal Parliament, Huber's speech includes issues such as confrontation of Turkey with its own history honestly and apparently, teaching the so-called genocide at German schools, commemoration of Johannes Lepsius who made a lot for the Armenians, the essence of the recognition of the genocide in order for the reconciliation between Turks and Armenians.<sup>63</sup>

#### **e. The Panel Activities of the EDK**

The dialogue between German society and the Protestant church has been consolidated by the aid of Protestant Academies (Evangelische Akademie<sup>64</sup>) network within which education programs and seminars supported by the Protestant Church. The panels dated 4-6 March 2005 (Berlin<sup>65</sup>) and 9-10 December 2005 (Wittenberg<sup>66</sup>) are just few examples of these programs and activities. The Mühlheim Protestant Academy seminar<sup>67</sup> dated as 23-25 March 2005 has already been organized together with the German-Armenian Association.<sup>68</sup> The Protestant Church tries to make the German public opinion admit the unfounded Armenian allegations through these kinds of panels.

#### **f. The Publications of the EKD**

EKD releases a series called as the "*EKD Texte*". Yet in 2003, within an article titled as 'What Christians Experience in Various Countries' (*Erfahrungen von Christen in verschiedenen Ländern*), it has been claimed that non-Muslims were under the oppression in Turkey and that the Armenians were subjected to genocide in 1915.<sup>69</sup>

Besides EKD, another institution that supports unfounded Armenian allegations is the Protestant Press Agency (Evangelischer Pressedienst – EPD). This

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63 [http://www.ekd.de/predigten/050423\\_huber\\_berliner\\_dom\\_armenier.html](http://www.ekd.de/predigten/050423_huber_berliner_dom_armenier.html), the last date of the accession 10.2.2006.

64 <http://www.ekd.de/akademien>, the last date of the accession 10.2.2006.

65 <http://www.eaberlin.de/41890.htm>. The ones participated in the conference are Tessa Hoffmann, Yelda Özcan supporting the Armenian thesis and the IHD authority who is Lawyer Eren Keskin known for his views about the Southeast problem.

66 <http://www.ev-akademie-wittenberg.de/downloads/programm2005-57-05.pdf>, the last day of the accession 10.2.2006.

67 <http://www.deutsch-armenische-gesellschaft.de/dag/tagmt1.htm>, the last date of the accession 10.2.2006.

68 <http://www.deutsch-armenische-gesellschaft.de/dag/tagmt1.htm>, the last date of the accession 10.2.2006. Armenian and German participants and Dr. Kürşat-Ahlers have participated in the conference.

69 [http://www.ekd.de/EKD-Texte/2059\\_ekd\\_texte\\_78\\_4.html](http://www.ekd.de/EKD-Texte/2059_ekd_texte_78_4.html), the last date of the accession 10.2.2006.



institution, as far as it expresses itself, “is an independent agency supported by the Protestant Church”<sup>70</sup> but EPD’s marketing of the proclamation and speeches of the so-called Armenian Genocide Panel organized by the Protestant Academy in Berlin on March 2005 is an indicator of collaboration between the EPD and EKD<sup>71</sup>.

However the rationale of the bridge existing between the church and government has not been generated only by the religious institutions.

CDU/CSU has established the Protestant Operation Group (Evangelischer Arbeitskreis – EAK) on behalf of their own politicians. There is not much information about the regulation, decision mechanisms and full members of the EAK financed by the union parties.<sup>72</sup> Its director is Thomas Rachel, a member of the Federal Parliament. The EAK regularly publishes a bulletin called *Evangelische Verantwortung* (The Protestant Responsibility), in which Protestant intellectuals write about their comments on governmental issues. The EAK bulletin includes one sided and critical articles about the Armenian question and Turkey. The latest example of this is the article titled as “Islam and Nationalism in Turkey” mentioned above.<sup>73</sup>

Dr. Christoph Bergner, one of the leading Protestant members of the Parliament, has used almost the same phrases used within the appeal of the CDU/CSU to the Parliament regarding the recognition of the so-called genocide with respect to word and content [(“being eradicated”, treating own history honestly and contributing to peace via confronting with history”, etc.] in his leading article titled as “About the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Commencement of the Armenians Eradication within the Ottoman Empire” published in *Evangelische Verantwortung* on April 2005.<sup>74</sup> The article praising Lepsius and his activities written by Prof. Dr. Goltz is about the proposal once again and it takes place in the same edition of the Bulletin: “political and intellectual power of revolt of Johannes Lepsius can

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70 [http://www.epd.de/index\\_1681.html](http://www.epd.de/index_1681.html), the last date of the accession 10.2.2006.

71 EPD Dokumentation 17-18/2005, *Der Völkermord an den Armeniern und syrischen Christen, Beiträge zur Tagung in der Evangelischen Akademie zu Berlin* (4.-6. März 2005) [The Genocide Exercised on the Armenian and the Syrian Christians, Contributions to the Berlin Protestant Academy], <http://www.eaberlin.de/41890.htm>, the last date of the accession 10.2.2006.

72 Göttrik Wewer, *Die großen Kirchen...., op.cit.*, p .60.

73 Rainer Glagow, *Islam und Nationalismus in der Türkei...., op. cit.*

74 Christoph Bergner, ‘Zum 90. Jahrestag des Beginns der Armeniervernichtung im Osmanischen Reich’ [About the 90<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Commencement of Armenian Eradication within the Ottoman Empire], (*Evangelische Verantwortung*, Vol. 4, 2005, pp. 1-5).

be compared with that of Dietrich Bonhoeffer.”<sup>75</sup> As Dietrich Bonhoeffer has opposed Hitler's dictatorship and risked his life, the Jon Turks and the Turks are viewed as the image of the Nazis, accordingly, the crime of Holocaust has been moderated via this comparison.

The relation between the EKD, EAK and the CDU/CSU is not a chance; rather, it is an indicator of a common attitude that can be derived from similar words such as “treating own history honestly” and “contributing to peace via confronting history”. Furthermore, existence of Hermann Gröhe, a member of the EKD Commission, among the Protestant members of the Parliament from CDU/CSU, is a concrete indicator of such a relation. The CDU member of the Parliament, the Protestant theologian and the Director of The Halle Martin Luther University Archive, Matthias Bergner is a supporter of the Armenian allegations and is the one who himself contributed to the CDU/CSU proposal submitted to the Parliament and the one providing the contact between the Protestant theologian Prof. Dr. Hermann Goltz and the Union Parties' Parliament Group.<sup>76</sup>

What are the underlying reasons of the success of Christian Democratic Union Parties' proposal? It is an important factor that Turkey is a significant matter of contention in the election procedure for Germany's internal policy. Christian Democratic Union Parties, which are against Turkey's EU membership from cultural and religious point of views and which are supporters of the 'privileged partnership', have thought that they would block the coalescence of Turkey by spotlighting the Armenian question<sup>77</sup>.

Social Democrats and Greens, that have been defeated in the provincial elections and decided to have an early election on May 2005, did refrain from pro-Turkish attitudes and approved the resolution titled as “Recalling and the Commemoration of the 1915 Armenian Deportation and Massacres: Germany Should Contribute To The Reconciliation Between Turkey and Armenia”. The contact of the proposal recorded by the SPD and Goltz was provided by the Protestant Theologian Markus Meckel.<sup>78</sup>

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75 Hermann Goltz, *Dr. Johannes Lepsius (1858-1926)*, (Evangelische Verantwortung, Vol. 4, 2005, p. 5)

76 Cem Özgönül, *Der Mythos eines Völkermordes....*, *op. cit.*, p. 60.

77 Ömer E. Lütem, 'Facts and Comments' ..., *op. cit.*, p. 45-46.

78 Cem Özgönül, *Der Mythos eines Völkermordes....*, *op. cit.*, p. 60.

## CONCLUSION

The German Parliament that has already rejected the Armenian allegations in the year 2000 adopted the resolution titled as “The Recalling and the Commemoration of the 1915 Armenian Deportation and Massacres: Germany Should Contribute to the Reconciliation between Turkey and Armenia” as an outcome of the attempts of the Christian Democratic Union Parties in 2005. There are several reasons of the recognition of the so-called genocide by the German Parliament. Germany, that has a negative image and a limited political field of action in international arena for decades as a result of the Holocaust, tries to make Turkey a partner of its crime through provoking Armenian question in order to moderate its own responsibility. Spotlighting of the so-called Armenian genocide also serves for impeding the integration of Turkey into the EU or that of its impact on the other EU countries. Furthermore, Germany is not likely to hold a policy contradicting French foreign policy, which had also recognized the Armenian genocide. Yet after the Cold War, Turkey lost its strategic importance for Germany, accordingly, there was no need for a pro-Turkish policy. Recognition of the so-called genocide by some other European Parliaments has made the German Parliament and outsider. Furthermore, German authorities, viewing Muslim Turks as a problem in Germany where unemployment is increasing, recognized the unfounded Armenian allegations in order to control the Turks more easily.

It is doubtful that significant part of the parliamentarians of CDU/CSU that submitted the question regarding the so-called genocide to the German Parliament is of Protestant origin. The policy of the German Protestant Church has been accelerated after 2004 EKD Magdeburg meeting regarding the recognition of the unfounded allegations by the German society and Parliament. EKD, which is in permanent contact with the German Parliament and Government, has organized activities such as large-scaled ceremonies, Commemoration meetings, bulletins and panels. The Coalition Government of Germany, which had composed of the Social Democrats and the Greens and which lost its votes and prestige by the inspiration of the early election, has also supported the resolution due to political concerns.

# CONFERENCE 1

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## NEW APPROACHES TO TURKISH-ARMENIAN ELATIONS ISTANBUL UNIVERSITY 15-17 MART 2006

Istanbul University organized an international symposium titled as “New Approaches to the Armenian Question”. As a matter of fact, Turkish-Armenian interrelation is knotted in the concept of genocide. This concept turned out to be a significant obstacle in front of inter-societal relations. What should be done is to evaluate the events that had taken place in 1915 with reference to its different aspects. These events had not only had political aspects; there are historical, legal, psychological and philosophical dimensions as well. Thus it is inevitable to approach this issue by considering these different dimensions.

The symposium had started with some meaningful gestures. First of all, for all the losses of World War I, the participants attended the stand of respect. Then, the National Anthem of Turkey was read by an Armenian girl, Katya Hallaçoğlu, who had recently won a contest on the reading of the National Anthem. Third, there was a small concert, which had started with Armenian songs from the Chorus of Surp Takavor Church and continued with Turkish songs and ended with the Anthem of Tenth Year. All these gestures showed the cultural richness of Turkey to the participants and the world public opinion via press agencies.

Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Foreign Minister Abdullah Gül and some other ministers showed their support buy sending telegrams to the opening ceremony of the symposium. In the message sent by Abdullah Gül, it was reflected that in Turkish history there is no single page to be ashamed of and joint researches on the Armenian question is encouraged.

Before the sessions, there happened a minor incident regarding the cover of a book exhibited in front of the conference hall by the Gomidas Institute, in which the crescent of the Turkish flag is depicted as a knife. However, the discussion on that matter did not escalate. Another significant point was the lack of Armenian scholars who studied the so-called genocide and the Turkish scholars who had recently attended the contentious conference organized by Bilgi University. Although many of them were invited, they refused this invitation and they were

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sharply criticized by Turkish press.

In his inaugural speech, the Rector of Istanbul University, Prof. Dr. Mesut Parlak argued that the date 1915 connotes the concept of 'genocide'; however the usage of this term impeded the normalization of Turkish-Armenian relations. He further stipulated that in the roots of many contemporary conflicts lied fanaticism and the parliamentary resolutions that recognized the Armenian genocide were reflections of this fanaticism.

The first session of the symposium was devoted to the historical dimension of the Armenian Question. In his controversial speech, Yair Auron from Open University of Israel, who was renowned for his support to the Armenian allegations, spoke about the Jewish witnesses to the so-called Armenian Genocide. However, lack of enough authentic evidence as well as his unconditional support to the Armenian allegations makes him a target of several questions from the audience, including Prof. Dr. Yusuf Halacoglu, the President of Turkish Historical Society.

In his speech, Prof. Dr. Mehmet Saray underlined the role of foreign interventions in the evolution of the Armenian question. He argued that Turkish nation, as a 'great nation', would never commit such crimes as genocide. Such an articulation was reacted by Prof. Auron, who gave the example of the activities of Yavuz Sultan Selim.

In the light of the Ottoman legal system, Gülnihal Bozkurt argued that non-Muslim communities were given significant rights and used them extensively; however they were quite reluctant when it came to their responsibilities. She further noted that these communities impeded the implementation of reforms that were designed by the Ottoman Empire. Ali Arslan, on the other hand, emphasized the role of Armenian Church, which had been a significant factor in the nation-building process of Armenia and argued that today the Armenian Church could play a more positive role regarding the normalization of Turkish-Armenian relations. Assist. Prof. Dr. E. Kürkçüoğlu commented on the Turkish sufferings in this period, whereas Prof. Dr. Servet Mutlu expressed his statistical studies on the Armenian population living in the Ottoman Empire.

The theme of the second session was the deportation itself. While Cem Özgönül tried to show the defacement of documents by Johannes Lepsius in the light of German archival documents regarding deportation, Prof. Dr. Hikmet Özdemir and Assoc. Prof. Dr. Yusuf Sarıay evaluated the concept of deportation with reference to the Ottoman archival documents. Hilmar Kaiser searched for

indications of genocide with reference to the reports of American missionaries in Merzifon, whereas Adam Balcer exposed his findings in the Polish archives, which refuted the genocide allegations.

The first session of the second day of the symposium was on the Armenian atrocities and propaganda. Assoc. Prof. Dr. Betül Arslan commented on the Armenian atrocities in Erzurum province in the light of archival evidence and criticized Prof. Auron's speech, which lacked enough authentic evidence. Prof. Dr. Enver Konukçu underlined the Armenianization of Eastern Anatolia starting from fifth century onwards. Prof. Dr. Justin McCarthy, on the other hand, argued that Armenian revolts during World War I was organized in line with the Russian strategy, thus he stipulated that the Armenian-Russian connection should not be neglected.

Another discussion was on the famous Blue Book written by Arnold Toynbee. While the publisher of the Blue Book, Ara Sarafian tried to prove that all the documents in the book are authentic. Retired Ambassador and Member of Parliament Şükrü Elekdağ refuted his claims and showed how this book was nothing but a piece of propaganda. Following a speech on the resolution of the Armenian question in the Lausanne Conference by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ömer Turan, the Director of ASAM Research Institute for Crimes against Humanity, Retired Ambassador Ömer E. Lütem showed how this question of history was tried to be revived today with reference to international conjuncture and clash of interests. Assoc. Prof. Dr. Sedat Laçiner and Jeremy Salt presented their articles on Armenian lobbying and propaganda activities.

In the second session of the second day regarding the legal aspect of the Armenian question, ASAM Law Advisor Assoc. Prof. Dr. Sadi Çaycı discussed the problematic usage of contemporary concepts in describing the past events and stipulated that this question could only be resolved legally. Following this, Prof. Dr. Aygün Attar delivered her speech on the Karabagh Question and the atrocities committed by Armenians in Karabagh region. Assoc. Prof. Dr. Kamer Kasım discussed the possible implications of the opening of Turkish-Armenian border, which had been closed for a long time because of Armenian occupation of Kelbecer region. The second day of the symposium ended with a cine-vision spectacle on the Armenian atrocities in Azerbaijan.

In the third day of the symposium the first session was convened to discuss the cultural, psychological, philosophical and humanitarian aspects of the Armenian question. The first speaker was Israel Charny, who made some general evalua-

tions regarding the destructiveness of human beings. His speech was generally tilted towards the Armenians. His advices for Turkish society to understand the sufferings of the Armenians would not suffice, since noone tried to understand Turkish sufferings at that period. In his speech entitled "The Psychological Dynamics of Turkish-Armenian Relations: Psychology of Victimization and Large Group Identity", Psychologist Sevinç Göral from ASAM analyzed the emergence of large-group identity and victimization psychology as well as their contribution to the ardent faith of the Armenians to the existence of the so called Armenian genocide.

In his emotional speech, a Lebanese Assyrian, Habib Afram, argued that they shared a similar past with the Armenians and that they did not blame Turkey for this problematic past. Bogos Levon Zekiyan, on the other hand, emphasized that the Armenian question was an anthropological and philosophical question, thus its limitation to the concepts of genocide or deportation made its resolution difficult.

ASAM President Rtd. Ambassador Gündüz Aktan dealt with the legal aspect of the Armenian question in a detailed way by articulating that the tragic events of 1915 can neither be accepted of genocide nor be limited only to the Armenians. This speech was a good combination of psychology and law and ended with an invitation that invited the Armenians to apply international courts. In the same session, Pulat Tacar summarizes the basic inter-communal problems and the methods to solve them. These speeches were followed by some other speeches on the role of genocide allegations on the construction of Armenian identity and the international aspect of this question

In an evaluation session presided by Prof. Dr. İlber Ortaylı, Gündüz Aktan, Israel Charny, Mehmet Saray, Justin McCarthy and Şükrü Elekdağ discussed the uses of such conferences in giving up old traumas and more sound evaluation of historical facts.

As a result, this conference contributed to the emergence of a platform used by scholars having different perceptions, to the desire of Turkish and Armenian scholars to work together and to a more diversified analysis of the Armenian question. It also refuted the allegations against Turkey, which argued that there is no freedom of speech in Turkey. The symposium was quite successful in terms of its academic composition, its novel approach to the question, its timing and the messages given.

## CONFERENCE 2

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### CONFERENCE ON THE REALITY OF ARMENIAN QUESTION BİLGİ UNIVERSITY INDEPENDENT SOCIAL MOVEMENT ASSOCIATION 15 APRIL 2006

**T**he Conference on the Reality of Armenian Question was organized by the Independent Social Movement Association (ISM) and Bilgi University ISM Student Club, on 15 April 2006 at the Dolapdere Campus of the University. The Conference, to which President of ASAM Rtd. Ambassador Gündüz Aktan, President of the Turkish Historical Society Prof. Dr. Yusuf Halaçoğlu and The Chair of Department of History of Dumlupınar University Prof. Dr. Aygün Attar participated as speakers, was presided by Efe Özbil, President of the ISM Association.

In the opening speech delivered by Efe Özbil, the aim of the Conference was stipulated as telling the historical realities which had been untold by another conference organized in September 2005 by Bilgi University titled as “The Conference on the Ottoman Armenians in the Period of Disintegration of the Empire”.

By reflecting on the legal aspect of the so-called Armenian genocide, Gündüz Aktan emphasized that it was not the parliaments but competent courts that could decide whether an historical occurrence was genocide or not. He said that the concept of genocide was a legal one and defined genocide in accordance with the 1948 UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide.

Aktan also mentioned that Armenians refrained from applying The Hague International Court of Justice. He argued that Turkish side could also apply to the ICJ but it was difficult to apply for the side that refused the allegations. He said that the Armenians did a fault by making us remembered the past and added that he was surprised for the exaggeration of this problem. Aktan also said that he was accused of defending the official thesis and argued that what was defended was not the official but the national thesis.

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Prof. Dr. Halaçoğlu said that Turkey opened its archives and proposed establishment of a joint commission of historians and added that the Armenians refused this offer. He argued that Armenians and Turks lived in Anatolia together since Seljuks and named as the loyal community in the Ottoman Empire as well as provided with significant bureaucratic posts. He emphasized the harmonious relations between two communities.

Halaçoğlu also argued that 1915 relocation was realized under the circumstances of World War I and that the Armenians were not relocated with the feelings of hatred; and he touched upon the Armenian revolts. He stipulated that during relocation some Armenians were died as a result of epidemics, hunger, or the attacks of Kurdish tribes and added that those, who treated the Armenians badly, had been punished. He also mentioned that the relocation was not applied to all Armenians but to those who revolted against the Empire. He said that there are historical evidence that many Armenians returned their homes safely after the war.

Halaçoğlu also argued that they were not defending the official thesis of the state since Turkey has no official thesis. He repeated his appeal to the Armenian side for jointly studying in the archives of both states. He added that during World War I Armenian bands killed 535.000 Muslims and this issue was generally neglected.

Prof. Dr. Aygün Attar emphasized that the Armenians had cooperated with the Allied powers during World War I. She argued that the Diaspora Armenians succeeded in passing resolutions in the parliaments of some countries recognizing the Armenian allegations due to their 'Greater Armenia' dream and added that it was the time for Turkey to react these resolutions.

In the last part of her speech, Prof. Attar showed a documentary on the Armenian occupation of Karabagh and the atrocities committed there. She said that Armenians committed serious massacres there; however, these atrocities did not come to the agenda of Turkey as well as world public opinion.

# CONFERENCE 3

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**ERCİYES UNIVERSITY  
I. INTERNATIONAL SOCIAL RESEARCH SYMPOSIUM  
(EUSAS)  
THE ART OF COEXISTENCE IN THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE  
THE EXAMPLE OF TURKISH-ARMENIAN RELATIONS  
20-22 APRIL 2006**

**T**he First International Social Research Symposium (EUSAS) was organized by Erciyes University between 20-22 April 2006 under the title "The Art of Coexistence in the Ottoman Empire: the Example of Turkish-Armenian Relations". The organization committee of the symposium included Prof. Dr. İlber Ortaylı, Prof. Dr. Bahaeddin Yediyıldız, Prof. Dr. Yahya Akyüz, Prof. Dr. Yavuz Ercan, Prof. Dr. Bayram Kodaman, Prof. Dr. Azmi Süslü, Prof. Dr. Ali İhsan Gencer, Prof. Dr. Feridun Emecen, Prof. Dr. M. Akif Aydın, Prof. Dr. Bilal Eryılmaz, Prof. Dr. Hikmet Özdemir, Prof. Dr. Kemal Çiçek, Prof. Dr. Mustafa Keskin, Prof. Dr. Tuncer Gülensoy, Prof. Dr. Sabri Yener, Prof. Dr. Şükrü Akdoğan, Prof. Dr. Ersoy Taşdemirci, Prof. Dr. Ahmet Uğur, Prof. Dr. Abdülkadir Yuvalı, Prof. Dr. Harun Güngör, Prof. Dr. Alik Aktan, Prof. Dr. Mahir Nakip, Prof. Dr. Kerim Türkmen, Prof. Dr. Bayram Bayraktar, Prof. Dr. Musa Şaşmaz and Prof. Dr. M. Metin Hülagü.

Different from many preceding symposiums, this symposium, to which Armenian Patriarch of Turkey Mesrob II attended, was significant for its novel approach to the Armenian question. As its title indicates, the aim of the symposium is not to examine the Armenian question but the Turkish-Armenian relations within the framework of Ottoman coexistence and tolerance culture. Examination of various aspects of Turkish-Armenian relations, such as literature, history, theology, arts, language or education, resulted in a more productive mutual understanding.

Other than Turkish researchers, there were participants coming from Tataristan, Nakhichevan and India.

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In the inaugural speech delivered by Patriarch Mesrob II, it was mentioned that examination of the Ottoman system, in which different ethnic communities had lived in harmony, was quite significant. He also emphasized that the perception of history is a matter of ethics and included universal thinking. He argued that a realist perception would be dependent on the degree of our independent thinking from values and subjective prejudices. He said "...reflecting the reality as it is requires courage and freedom. If we are stuck into a definite form, if we are slaves of a particular ideology, if we have a nationalist, racist and militarist character, we would have some problems in expressing the truth and reflecting the reality to the new generations"

Furthermore, Patriarch emphasized the role of Armenian political parties and the Armenian Church in the emergence of the Armenian question and put the responsibility both on the Turks and the Armenians. He also mentioned the influence of the Great Powers of the time and argued that it would not be ethically true for any side to reject its own responsibility and to blame solely the other side. Among many novel and interesting speeches, some of them are to be mentioned here.

To start with, in a speech titled "Pro-Turkish Diaspora Armenians", Assist. Prof. Dr. Ayten Sezer discussed the role of some Diaspora Armenians who aimed to develop friendly relations with Turkey instead of pursuing an endless hatred as others. Another speech by Assoc. Prof. Aftab Kamal Pasha from Jawaharlal Nehru University, India, carried the title of "Ottoman-Tipu Sultanate Relations: The Role of Armenian Merchants in Maysor". Dr. Aftab analysed these relations via using the archival documents that he had reached in Mumbai and Delhi. Another Indian speaker from the same university Prof. Dr. Mansure Haidar delivered a speech on the Ottoman-Armenian relations in the light of Indian resources and emphasized the tolerance of the Ottoman Empire towards Armenians.

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Galibe Hacıyeva from Nakhichevan State University presented an article titled "Turkish-Originated Armenian Personal Names" and argued that many Armenian names such as Demirciyan, Koçaryan etc. are Turkish in essence. Accordingly, this shows the degree of integration of the Armenian community to the Turkish society. Güzel Tuymova from Tataristan Academy of Sciences delivered a speech on the similarity of musical instruments used in Armenian and Tatar cultures.

In the concluding declaration of the symposium it was emphasized that Turk-

ish-Armenian relations, which almost have a past of 1000 years, were generally peaceful and harmonious due to the art of coexistence of the Ottoman Empire. Armenians contributed much to the Ottoman art and culture and integrated to the Ottoman society quite successfully. Starting from 18th century onwards, Armenians also took place in bureaucratic and diplomatic circles. However, in the 19th century particularly foreign interventions disturbed these harmonious relations. Attendance of Mesrob II to this conference was quite significant for the realization of the aims of this conference, the most important of which is to contribute to mutual understanding between these two communities.

In the concluding declaration following proposals were accepted for the resolution of the problems between these two communities: organization of similar conferences, establishment of direct contact between these two communities, making common researches and projects, transcription and translation of Armenian and Turkish resources and provision of the contribution of the universities by establishing Armenian research institutes and teaching Armenian language.



# CONFERENCE 4

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**ARMENIAN SYMPOSIUM IN THE LIGHT OF SCIENCE  
MARMARA UNIVERSITY  
FACULTY OF SCIENCE AND LETTERS, DEPARTMENT OF  
HISTORY  
21 APRIL 2006**

**I**n this one-day symposium, under six sessions, twenty-five speeches were delivered regarding all aspects of the Armenian question. These speeches would later be published as a book.

In the evaluation session presided by Prof. Dr. Mehmet Saray, the President of Atatürk Research Center, Prof. Dr. Hikmet Özdemir from the Turkish Historical Society commented on the success of this symposium and argued that annual organization of this symposium would be useful and wanted the Organization Committee continuously work for this purpose. He declared his content for the presentations produced from original researches and argued for the necessity of original researches for such kind of meetings. He also offered establishment of a committee for funding similar conferences, enlisting other topics for extensive research and providing continuous communication by establishing an internet group.

Yusuf Sarııay, The Director-General of the State Archives, said that it was the time for abandoning defensive psychology in approaching the Armenian question. He touched upon the importance of determination of the responsibilities of all, including the Great Powers, in these researches. He added that we should work in foreign archives, not only in the Ottoman archives. He also told that besides general studies, analytical researches as well as detailed studies would be quite useful.

I stipulated that in foreign countries Armenian allegations found many followers and the main reason for this was the lack of announcement of the Turkish opinions abroad. I argued that writing books in Turkish would not suffice; it was

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necessary to write books in other languages and these books should be spread effectively throughout the world. What is more, I added that it was necessary to analyze some issues more in detail and gave the example that a book written twenty years ago had refuted the Armenian allegation that there are some telegraphs written by Talat Pasha ordering genocide. Moreover, I said that the number of scholars who were specifically studying Armenian question was not sufficient and both universities and Higher Education Institution had some responsibilities regarding that matter.

The symposium ended with the wishes of Prof. Saray on making more research on this matter and establishing more coordination between scholars and scientific institutions.

# CONFERENCE 5

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**SYMPOSIUM ON THE "PROJECTS OF PARTITION OF THE  
WEST FROM THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE TO LAUSANNE"  
BAŞKENT UNIVERSITY  
CENTER FOR STRATEGIC RESEARCH  
26-27 APRIL 2006**

**W**ith the process of disintegration of the Ottoman Empire, particularly in the 19th century, the 'Eastern Question' became the most significant agenda item in European diplomacy; and each European state tried to take a role in determining the future of the Ottoman Empire. On the one hand, the issue of 'who takes which part of the Empire' turned out to be a significant matter of contention; on the other hand ethnic groups living in the Empire were supported in their separatist quests. Those disintegrative movements were started in the Balkans and later spread to the other parts of the Empire.

In a symposium organized by the Başkent University Center for Strategic Research, the role and policies of Western European states regarding the disintegration of the Empire were analyzed and new archival studies of historians were unfolded. What is more, new archival documents on the Armenian question were presented and the perceptions of European states regarding Armenian question as well as contemporary resolution attempts of this question were analysed. The legal formula presented by Retired Ambassador Şükrü Elekdağ attracted attention due to its novel approach to the Armenian question.

Another subject that had been emphasized during the symposium was the policies of Greece and the Greeks and its evolution throughout history. Within this context, the policies of Western states towards Athens and its reflections on Turkey were analyzed.

The symposium, which brought together both domestic and foreign historians, provided reevaluation of the events of that period in the light of new evidence with special reference on the Armenian question.

Below, the reader is provided with the concluding evaluation of the symposium prepared by the Center for Strategic Research:

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“In the symposium titled as “The Projects of Partition of the West from the Ottoman Empire to Lausanne”, which has been organized by Başkent University Center for Strategic Research in 26-27 April 2006, some contemporary conclusions and duties were stipulated.

The aim of the symposium was to evaluate the partition projects of the West designated during the interregnum and retreat periods, which had started after the defeat of Vienna in 1683, following the foundation and rising periods of the Empire. Contemporary ramifications of these projects as well as the contemporary Western plans carrying the same aims were among the subjects analyzed by the participants.

The common emphasis of the speeches was that the Western policies, strategies and methods targeting the Ottoman Empire were one of the most significant examples of world history. The speakers presented offered making some studies for enlightening all suffered nations about the possible plans of the imperialist states as well as for coming together in order to prevent such initiatives. Accordingly, it was emphasized that these studies will prevent the repetition of history and contribute to the common targets of universal values.

The concluding evaluation of the symposium reflected contemporary situation and necessary precautions with these words: “Even if the problem was seen solely as Kurdish, Armenian or Aegean problems, indeed, the foundations of these problems rested upon the old target of partitioning Anatolia and making Turkey dependent on the West economically. In reality, this is a question of demolishing and Western partition projects still continue around the same target of demolishing. The only way to face this threat was cooperation, a strong coordination, struggle and consolidation of Turkish identity. Although Cooperation was tried to be provided by establishment of some organizations, meetings and conferences; however, coordination has not been strongly established and a consensus has not been achieved yet.

The duties of universities start at this point. Determining contemporary issues and bringing them to the agenda; discussing these issues; enlightening the society; providing coordination that has not been achieved should be the targets of the universities. Başkent University has achieved this target both in terms of timing and subject matter. It put forward the issues that should be considered by bringing the threats and problems from past to present. The most significant issue is that the Western partition projects still continue.”

## BOOK REVIEW

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Samuel Weems, *Ermenistan: Terörist "Hıristiyan" Ülkenin Sırları*, (Armenia: Secrets of A "Christian" Terrorist State), translated from Azeri Turkish by Hüseyin Adıgüzel, (İstanbul: İleri Yayınları, March 2006), ISBN 975-6288-82-5, 392 pages.

**T**his book written by an American judge, Samuel Weems, analyzes the policies of Armenian state and related matters such as the genocide allegations, Armenian-Azeri relations, Karabagh problem and Armenian lobbying activities in the United States. By referring mainly the British and American archival documents, Weems tries to show the inconsistency and inaccuracy of the Armenian claims. He also warns the US people that many funds, which are established by the taxes of the American people, are allocated to the Armenians for their belligerent quests.

In the long prologue of his book, Samuel Weems argues that particularly the September 11 events and consequent developments in the Arab world reflect a hatred towards American government. He accepts that there are some significant reasons for this hatred. According to Weems, American hypocrisy towards terrorism, namely supporting terrorist activities of some states while punishing those, which try to counter these activities, is one of the reasons of this hatred. He mentioned the 1992 Armenian attack on Azerbaijan and criticized American financial aid towards Armenia and the Congress' decision to block the aids delivered to Azerbaijan. He also writes that the Armenian claims of genocide are quite inaccurate since relocation of the Ottoman Armenians could never be deemed as genocide. Towards the latter parts of his prologue he described the activities of the Armenian lobbies in the United States to suppress any claim that depicts the events of 1915 as something other than a genocide. He further enlisted several e-mails that he received from Armenians most of which threatened him. However still, he writes that there are righteous Armenians who found these quarrels meaningless.

Following this long prologue, in a relatively shorter introduction, Weems pro-

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vided a historical background of the Armenian question by referring to the interference of the Great Powers to the Ottoman Empire in the nineteenth century. He perceives Armenian relocation as a must condition for the survival of the Ottoman Empire. What is more, he claims that the Armenian relocation is just one side of the story. While observing the losses of the Armenians during the first decades of the twentieth century, the world public opinion generally disregards the losses of the Muslim population. He informs that just between 1827 and 1878, almost one and a half million Muslims were deported by the Russians from their homelands. He criticized the international academic opinion, which just focuses on the Armenian losses while ignoring the Muslim sufferings.

In the first chapter, entitled as the 'Holy Terror', Weems tries to put forward the interrelationship between the Armenian Church and the Armenian state; and historically examines the role of Armenian Church in revolutionary Armenian activities in the nineteenth century. While making this analysis he refers to some American and British archival documents, which articulates the relationship between the Armenian Patriarchate and the foreign representatives in Istanbul. He concludes that from the very beginning the Patriarchate was very successful in using Christianity to provoke Armenians in the Ottoman Empire, as well as in attracting the attention of European and American peoples through agents, who made a strong propaganda by telling stories about the Armenian sufferings in the Ottoman Empire.

The second chapter mainly examines the Armenian terrorist activities organized by the Armenian revolutionary committees, particularly by *Hinçak* and *Taşnaksutyun*. Founded in the last quarter of the nineteenth century these two organizations were responsible for many rebellions in Anatolia. In a chronological sequence, Weems enlists these terrorist activities as well as the Muslim casualties, and depicts these events as one of the most significant reasons of the relocation. He further claims that this process of relocation was not free from problems. Both natural conditions, such as hunger, lack of hygiene and climate, and attacks towards the convoys resulted in many Armenian casualties; however, this does not necessarily mean that there is an organized intent to eliminate a group of people just because they are members of that group. Weems also argues that the punishment of some Ottoman officials because of their incapability to provide the security of the Armenians proved that the relocation could not be perceived as genocide.

The third chapter is on the establishment of the Armenian Republic in the

aftermath of the World War I. Here, Weems analyzes the ruling elite of this new state and defines them as 'despotic rulers' who pursued an aggressive foreign policy towards their neighbors. In this chapter, he examines the Armenian attack towards Georgia and Azerbaijan and its subsequent defeats. Armenians were also defeated by the Turkish army in that period. What is more, the government failed to control the internal dissidence and chaotic uprisings, as well as it failed to cope with financial crisis. Thus, the Armenian government tried to unify the Armenians through the perception of an external threat. This partially explains the Armenian belligerency in that period.

Following two short chapters on the Armenian abuse of statistical information for producing exaggerated numbers of Armenian casualties and the Armenian-Georgian war in 1918-1919, the sixth chapter examines the Admiral Bristol Report on the conditions of the Armenian in the Ottoman Empire. Admiral Bristol, who served as the Commander of the U.S. Naval Detachment in Turkish waters and as the U.S. High Commissioner to Turkey during the years 1919-1927, prepared a report in which he criticized the Armenian demands from the Allies in establishing an Armenian state in Eastern Anatolia. He also mentioned the fallacy of many reports arguing that thousands of Armenians were slaughtered by the Ottoman government.

The seventh chapter mainly deals with the recent Armenian terrorist activities, particularly towards Turkish diplomats and towards some American scholars who argued that the events of 1915 could not be labeled as genocide. In this chapter, Weems severely criticizes the silence of the Armenian Church as well as the Armenian state regarding these terrorist activities.

In the eighth chapter, Weems writes about the sufferings of the Armenian citizens of the first Republic of Armenia because of belligerent foreign policy pursued by the Armenian ruling elite and the subsequent financial crisis. He argues that the credits provided from the US and Russia in late 1910s and early 1920s were spent to finance this aggressive policy towards the neighbors of Armenia and it was the Armenians that suffered the most from this situation.

Ninth, tenth and eleventh chapters elaborate further on the Armenian terrorist activities and Armenian rebellions against the Ottoman Empire in the nineteenth century. The twelfth and thirteenth chapters, on the other hand, examine the Armenian lobbying activities and propaganda as early as 1920s in the United States. Accordingly, Weems writes about the establishment of the Armenian Cen-

tral Committee in the United States for influencing the main American policy makers on behalf of the Armenians. What is more, he analyzes the activities of Armenian agents in the United States who tried to raise American public opinion against Turkey by producing fake testimonies and documents. Weems also explains the reports prepared by some American officers who were sent to Anatolia to examine the Armenian claims, such as Emory Niles and Arthur Sutherland. The report prepared by these officers claimed that it was the Muslim population that suffered the most from the events that had taken place in these regions.

In the fourteenth and fifteenth chapters, Weems examines the perceptions of the Allied Powers of the First World War about the Armenians. He claims that neither the British, nor the French were counted on the Armenians. What is more, he analyzes the British stance in a more detailed way and concludes that, in reality, the British were convinced of the inexistence of genocide.

The sixteenth and seventeenth chapters are mainly on the war between Armenia and Azerbaijan in 1920s and its subsequent implications for both Armenia and Armenia-US relations. Accordingly, as a result of the defeat by the Azeri army, economic conditions of the Armenians were worsened and to remedy this economic crisis Armenian government applied the Unites States for credit. Even in this application, they did not hesitate to use propaganda of the so-called Armenian genocide. The American authorities began to react these demands. As the eighteenth chapter reveals, American Senate refused to send military as well as economic aid to Armenia in 1920. In this chapter Weems provided the reader with the records of the Senate and the speeches of some Senators against the Armenian demands.

The nineteenth and twentieth chapters examine the Armenian politics in the interwar period and in the World War II. Here Weems analyzes the accession of Armenia to the Soviet Union and the relationship between the Armenian committees in Europe and the Nazis of Germany. Weems made some quotations from some Armenian newspapers which supported Nazi policies against the Jews.

In lieu of conclusion, the last chapter of the book is devoted to contemporary Armenia. Here, Weems writes that Armenia is still acting as a terrorist state in the new millennia. Particularly, its relations with Azerbaijan and its unlawful occupation of Karabagh are referred in this chapter. What is more, Weems argues that there is no freedom of speech in Armenia and one reason for that is the suppressive influence of the Armenian Church. In the final pages, Weems analyzes

the works of the Turkish-Armenian Reconciliation Committee and writes that the reason of its failure was the uncompromising, even aggressive, stance of the Armenian side.

All in all, this book provides the reader with significant documents regarding Armenian genocide allegations, as well as lobbying activities in the United States. However, as Weems himself admitted, it can not easily be labeled as an academic study. The book is very difficult to follow, since the chronological sequence is sometimes broken. What is more, it is full of repetitions, which makes the book too voluminous. It is almost 400 pages, but it can be rewritten in 200 pages or so. Despite these technical problems, the book is quite interesting and presents useful documents for a more sound understanding of the Armenian state as well as the genocide allegations. What is more, it contributes to the literature by assessing the influence of the Armenian lobbying activities in the United States; and this is a valuable contribution, since there is not much work on that matter.



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Mustafa Çalık (ed.), *The Armenian Genocide Allegations: When Improper Calculation Returned from Talat and Relocation*, (Ankara: Cedit Neşriyat Yayınları, 2006), 260 pages.

**T**he book entitled “Ermeni Soykırımı İddiaları: Yanlış Hesap Talât’dan ve Tehcir’den Dönünce “ (The Armenian Genocide Allegations: When Improper Calculation Returned from Talat and Relocation) is an edition, including the articles of Justin McCarthy, Gündüz Aktan, Guenter Lewy, Nuri Bilgin, Yusuf Halaçoğlu, Kemal Çiçek, Yusuf Sarıay, Ömer Turan and Hikmet Özdemir.

The main topics of the book are the emergence of the Armenian question, Turkish-Armenian relations and the reasons of Armenian deaths during the First World War. Besides these, the legal dimension of the Armenian question as well as the martial courts of relocation era is also comprehensively included in the book.

Within the part starting with Justin McCarthy’s article named as “Who initialized?” it is observed that the author questions history and being historian. The author, who emphasizes the necessity of investigation of the archives of all actors of Armenian question before its history is written, also expresses that history can not be written by feeding only from a single source and that it would not be history in case of it is written so.

McCarthy, who states that fields of politics and history are independent of each other, mentions that the politicians should not make judgments about history and they should undertake all duties and responsibilities of history if they do so. He criticizes that especially French and the European Union Parliament never pursued the methodology utilized by the historians and that they adopted resolutions regarding historical issues although they did not have time to make research on them.

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McCarthy, who explains that many authors in Turkey write books recognizing the so-called genocide and that they are able to freely declare their thoughts regarding the issue, by remarking that Turkey is mature and self confident He also mentions that the same indulgence is not displayed towards the Turks in Europe, who declares that “genocide had not been performed”.

McCarthy, who interprets the struggle of the Turks against the Armenians as self-defense, expresses this action with these words: “Anyone who were in the Turks’ position would do the same”. The author expresses that the problem between these two societies started to emerge not by the 19<sup>th</sup> century, in opposition to known, but by the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

McCarthy, who explains that the deterioration of the Turkish-Armenian relations by the beginning of (1877-1878) the Ottoman-Russian War happened to be more apparent due to the revolutionary Armenian Committees, also mentions about the roles of the Western countries and of the Armenian Church with respect to the rebellions at 1890s. The author, who examines the First World War and the emergence of the problem between Azerbaijan and Armenia within the following part of the article, highlights that the main dispute between two countries was triggered by the push of the Armenian nationalists (united with the Bolsheviks) in order to eradicate the Turkish population in Baku.

The part named as “The Armenian Question with Respect to International Law”, on the other hand, has been authored by Rtd. Ambassador Gündüz Aktan. Aktan emphasizes that it has been paid attention more on the political and historical aspects of the Armenian case up to date, and that its legal aspect, on the other hand, has been neglected.

Aktan remarks that the word “genocide” was first come out by the Polish Jew Raphael Lemkin and that Lemkin described also the Armenian events as genocide. He has emphasized that the genocide description of Lemkin gradually narrowed due to the development of law through time. Accordingly, the actions performed in order to physically and biologically eradicate only certain groups, not every group, were started to be qualified as genocide.

Aktan mentions that the first legal document including the definition of genocide is the UN Convention on the Prevention and the Punishment of the Crime of Genocide adopted on 9 December 1948. According to the agreement, which came into force at 1951, genocide was considered to be realized by performing a

group of actions in order to eradicate a national, ethnic, racial or a religious group as a whole or in part.

Aktan, who pays attention to the genocide issue in terms of the international law, emphasizes that the international society does not perform the same sensitivity with respect to the crimes against the humanity.

Aktan emphasizes that a racial hatred similar to the one felt by the Nazis towards the Jewish did not exist within the Ottomans towards the Armenians and that the relocation was not applied to eradicate the Armenians as a group. He also points out that the relocation was not exercised on the whole Armenians and that the Ottomans did not have any intention to exterminate a particular group as the definition of genocide supposed.

In his article named as “Reevaluation of the Armenian Genocide”, Guenter Lewy examines three main sources of the genocide allegations. Initially, the author, who investigates the Martial Courts (*Divan-ı Harb-i Orfi*) founded at 1912-1920, explains that how unreliable the judgments held by these courts were. By mentioning that the existence of six regional courts during these judgments is known, the author specifies that the overall number of the courts are not known due to the insufficiency of the documents.

Lewy, who later on pays attention on the arguments of the role of the Special Organization (*Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa*), that is one of the main subjects of the Armenian allegations, at the so-called Armenian genocide, manifests through documentary evidence that this organization was not involved in the genocide.

The author, who evaluates the documents within Aram Andonyan’s book (*The Memoirs of Naim Bey*) lastly, states that the authenticity of these documents is extremely subject to discussion.

In the article of Prof. Dr. Nuri Bilgin, titled as “The Armenian Genocide Allegations and Construction of History”, examines social usage of the genocide allegations, functionality of the Turk as the other and the charm of victimization are emphasized. Bilgin, who compares the attitudes of the West regarding the Armenian question with the theme within Sartre’s work *Nausea*, explains why the Armenian question is supported so much in the West.

Bilgin, who also mentions about the importance of mass media with respect to

persistence of the problem within the agenda, emphasizes that people strangely become pleasant, from a social psychological point of view, while reading or witnessing the evil things experienced by the others. The author, who highlights that considering the negativities of the others relaxes the individual, emphasizes that the individual feels better accordingly or, to put it in another way, he almost confesses by this way.

Furthermore, Bilgin, by explaining that the 'barbarian Turk' image at the Ottoman era was succeeded by the image of the Turk as the occupier and genocide perpetrator by the collapse of the Empire, expresses that the hostility coming from the previous periods' against the Turk reaches today.

Within the book, which includes a brief evaluation of Prof. Dr. Yusuf Halaçoğlu regarding the Armenian genocide allegations, it is discussed, by relying upon Russian archives, why the Armenians were subjected to relocation during the years of war. Halaçoğlu, who also mentions about the precautions that were taken during the years of relocation, highlights that none of the countries of the world would keep silent in front of the ones that tries to destroy itself.

Within the article of Prof. Dr. Kemal Çiçek, it is observed that the historical aspect of the Turkish-Armenian relations is examined thoroughly. Çiçek, who is rather intensified on the first meeting of the Muslim Turks with the Armenians, emphasizes that the Armenians used to undertake significant duties within the Ottoman state.

Çiçek, who declares that the relocation was a legitimate security precaution and that it was not applied on all of the Armenians, also submits the provisions of the decree on relocation for readers' information. Besides this, the article also analyzes the conditions within which the relocation had been operationalized. The author, who highlights that, besides the Armenians, people from numerous parts of the country was also affected negatively due to the prevailing conditions of the country during the relocation, expresses that much of the Armenians turned back by the end of war.

Within the part titled as 'Relocation of the Armenians and the Trials' written by the Director-General of the Prime Ministry State Archives, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Yusuf Sarıнай, it is observed that the reasons of the immigration are highlighted once more. Sarıнай, who remarks that the investigation commissions were established within the regions of relocation and the ones abusing their posts were

sent to the Military Courts. He concluded that 1673 people, including mayors, soldiers and Special Organization agents were judged in these courts.

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ömer Turan from the Middle East Technical University, Department of History, examines the subject of 'The Armenians in 1830-1831 According to American Missioners E. Smith and H. G. O. Dwigth'. Turan, who rather focuses on the regional activities of the American Board Missioners, emphasizes that these missioners prepared some reports analyzing ethnic and religious backgrounds of the population within the regions they were employed. The author, who remarks that various strategies were developed regarding the region due to these reports, highlights that they also drew attention to the Western public opinion on the region.

The last article carries the title 'Epidemics and Deaths during the First World War' and written by Prof. Dr. Hikmet Özdemir. He examines the difficulty of war conditions during First World War years and the insufficiency of health services are highlighted. It is observed that the author remarks the Turkish losses, as stated in many English, German and Russian sources, due to hunger and disease. By this way, it is understood that the epidemic diseases cropped up during the years of war not only caused deaths of the relocated Armenians but also that of so many Muslims.

It is possible to evaluate this edition by Mustafa Çalık as an important source that might be utilized by readers.



## ARCHIVAL DOCUMENTS

### THE ARTICLE PUBLISHED IN LE JOURNAL D'ORIENT ON 26 APRIL 1923 ABOUT THE DECLARATIONS OF THE ARMENIAN PATRIARCH IN ISTANBUL AND ITS REFLECTIONS IN THE AMERICAN SECRETARY OF STATE

**A**rmenian question acquired another meaning when the Ottoman empire was defeated in the World War I. Armenians, who failed to establish an independent – or at least autonomous – state in Eastern Anatolia via armed attacks and rebellions, decided to reach their aims via diplomacy. Particularly during the negotiations of the Armistice of Mudros, Paris Peace Conference and the Sevres Treaty, which had never been implemented, Armenian delegations determined the borders of their prospective states by meeting with the leaders of Great Powers. However, all these projects were failed after the Turkish war of Independence and dropped from the agenda definitely with the Treaty of Lausanne.

The three documents presented below could be evaluated as the documents ending the Armenian dreams during the Lausanne Peace Conference. They included the declarations of the Armenian Patriarch of Istanbul about the Armenian question, published in Journal d'Orient on 26 April 1923; an introductory report by Admiral Bristol announcing these declarations to the American Secretary of State; and a short note written by one of the diplomats of the Near Eastern Department of the Secretary of State, Alan Dulles, for the circulation of this article within the departments of the Secretary of State.

In his declaration, Patriarch Kevork Arslanyan argued that they wanted to live in peace and harmony with other communities of the Turkish state. The most striking point of his declarations was his acceptance of the failure of the 'Greater Armenia' dreams of the Armenians. It can be said that these brave words contributed to the Turkish stance in Lausanne Peace Conference regarding the Armenian question.

The article including Patriarch's declarations announced to the United States

immediately by the American High Representative in Turkey, Admiral Bristol. He, who had already prepared a report regarding the Armenian question, perceived the publishing of this article as a significant event. In his words, “the whole article illustrates admirable the present feelings of a leader of the Armenians thoroughly exasperated after the past few years of loquacious and long-distance altruism.” In other words, with these declarations Armenians living in Turkey complained about the harmful efforts of the Diaspora Armenians.

As a young diplomat, who would be the Head of American Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) between 1953 and 1961, Allan Dulles argued that the article sent by Admiral Bristol was of high importance and emphasized the complaints of Turkish Armenians regarding Diaspora Armenians once more.

As a result, these three documents were significant for the announcement of the perceptions of Turkey’s Armenians to the American public opinion. Therefore, it was decided that these documents should be presented to the Turkish public opinion.

UNITED STATES HIGH COMMISSION  
American Embassy  
Constantinople

April 28, 1923.

No. 785

*NE*  
*Tel. to Constantinople*  
*Oct 20/23*  
*R 5th 7/13*  
**OCT 20 1923**

**DEPARTMENT OF STATE**  
MAY 1 1923  
DIVISION OF  
NEAR EASTERN AFFAIRS.

**Department of State**  
MAY 1 1923  
Division of  
Political and Economic Information

*Call to Constantinople*  
*3/13/23*  
**MAY 31 1923**

**INDEX RECORDED**  
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The Honorable  
The Secretary of State,  
Washington.

Sir:

There is, in my opinion, much food for thought in the enclosed article setting forth the views of Monsignor Kevork Arslanian, of the Armenian Gregorian Patriarchate. This article appeared in "Le Journal d'Orient", a Constantinople daily newspaper, of April 26, 1923.

Apparently Monsignor Arslanian is prepared to deal with his enemies if he can only get rid of his friends from whose importunate humanitarianism the Armenians in Turkey may indeed pray to be delivered. The whole article illustrates admirably the present feelings

**JUN 1 1923**



CLASSIFICATION CANCELED AUTHORITY LETTER  
OF 1-8-58 FROM W. H. ANDERSON, STATE DEP'T  
BY *J. J. [unclear]* DATE *5 May 61*

-2-

feelings of a leader of the Armenians thoroughly exasperated after the past few years of loquacious and long-distance altruism. I have pointed out time and again to the Department the consequences of this altruism. The altruists escape and the Armenians and Greeks in Turkey pay the bills.

I have the honor to be, Sir,

Your obedient servant,



Mark L. Bristol  
Rear-Admiral, U.S. Navy  
UNITED STATES HIGH COMMISSIONER.

Enclosure:

Copy and translation of  
article in "Le Journal d'Orient",  
dated April 25, 1923.

CLASSIFICATION CANCELED AUTHORITY LETTER  
OF 1-8-58 FROM W. H. ANDERSON, STATE DEP'T

BY *J. J. J. J.* DATE *5 May 61*

Enclosure No. 1 with Despatch No. 785

COPIE.

Une Déclaration du Patriarche des Arméniens.

Mgr. Kévorc Arslanian effendi patriarche arménien, accompagné d'Artine Mostidjian effendi, président de l'Assemblée laïque, a rendu visite hier à S. M. Adnan Bey, représentant du ministère des affaires étrangères en notre ville.

Son Eminence a exprimé ses regrets au sujet d'une nouvelle parue dans un journal local et d'après laquelle le patriarcat arménien aurait fait des préparatifs en vue d'un attentat. Son Eminence pria également S. M. Adnan Bey pour qu'une enquête soit ouverte à cet effet en vue d'éclairer l'opinion publique. Mgr. Arslanian nous a fait hier à ce sujet les déclarations que voici:

"Les nouvelles que l'on a fait circuler à propos du patriarcat arménien sont vraiment regrettables. Nous n'entretenant aucun contact avec les étrangers, et nous n'avons n'anti personne d'aucune espèce d'autorisation. Si vraiment des préparatifs malveillants sont en cours, je tiens à ce qu'ils soient tirés au clair. Pour ma part, je puis vous affirmer qu'aussi longtemps que j'occuperai le siège patriarcal de détestables incidents dans le genre de celui que l'on a voulu vréer ne se produiront pas.

"Les Arméniens vivant en Turquie ont compris la vérité. Ils sont animés du désir de vivre fraternellement avec l'élément turc.

Le peuple arménien s'est complètement désintéressé du "home national" et de toutes les autres questions de ce genre. Il entend mener une existence tranquille, dans ce pays, et respecter pleinement les autorités établies. Je n'ai aucune connaissance de la nouvelle d'après laquelle on songerait à créer un foyer pour les Arméniens, au nord de la Syrie; d'ailleurs, toute cette question n'intéresse ni moi personnellement, ni le peuple arménien. Cela est si vrai que nous ne nous en sommes même pas occupés.

Jusqu'à ce jour, on a beaucoup promis au peuple arménien, sans que jamais rien ait été réalisé. Peut-être veut-on essayer une fois de plus de se servir de notre peuple comme d'un instrument. Mais ceux qui désirent semer à nouveau la discorde se détrompent: leurs manœuvres sont désavouées non seulement par les Arméniens de Turquie mais aussi par tous les arméniens conscients et honnêtes vivant à l'étranger."

CLASSIFICATION CANCELED AUTHORITY LETTER  
OF 1-8-58 FROM W. H. ANDERSON, STATE DEPT

BY *J. J. [Signature]* DATE *5 May 61*

Translation.

DECLARATION OF THE ARMENIAN PATRIARCH.

Mgr. Kévoik Arslanian effendi, Armenian Patriarch, accompanied by Artine Mostidjian effendi, President of the laical Assembly, paid a visit yesterday to His Excellency Adnan Bey, Representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in our town.

His Eminence expressed his regrets in regard to a communication which had appeared in the local newspapers stating that the Armenian patriarch was preparing an outrage against the Turks. His Eminence also requested H.E. Adnan Bey to have an inquiry instituted on this question with a view of enlightening the public opinion. Mgr. Arslanian yesterday made the following statements to us concerning this question:

"The news which have been spread concerning the Armenian Patriarchate are truly to be regretted. We do not keep in contact with foreigners and we have given no one any kind of authorization. If it is true that malevolent preparations are being made I desire that they should be brought to light. On my part I can affirm that so long as I shall occupy the post of Patriarch detestable incidents such as the one which is now desired to create shall not take place.

"Armenians living in Turkey have understood the truth. They are animated by the desire to live in brotherhood with the Turkish element.

The Armenian nation has completely lost interest in the 'Armenian Home' and other questions of like nature. It desires to lead a peaceful existence in this country and to fully respect the established authorities. I have no knowledge of the news according to which a Home for the Armenians is being thought of in the north of Syria; this question does not interest me personally or the Armenian Nation. This is so true that we have not even shown any interest in it.

Up to the present much has been promised to the Armenian people but nothing was ever realized. Perhaps once more it is desired to use our people as an instrument. But those who wish to sow discord again are mistaken; their manoeuvres are disclaimed not only by all Armenians of Turkey but also by all conscious and honest Armenians living abroad."

CLASSIFICATION CANCELED AUTHORITY LETTER  
 OF 1-8-58 FROM W. H. ANDERSON, STATE DEPT  
 BY *J. J. [unclear]* DATE *5 May 61*

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

*noted  
 [unclear]*

*[Handwritten initials: J, J, ME]*

DIVISION OF NEAR EASTERN AFFAIRS

Index prepared  
 RECEIVED  
 MA. 20 1923  
 Dep't. of State

The Secretary  
 Mr. Phillips

RECEIVED May 19 1923  
 MAY 19 1923  
 Dep't. of State

SECRETARY OF STATE  
 MAY 19 1923

The attached despatch from the High Commission at Constantinople encloses a most significant statement attributed to the Armenian Patriarchate in Constantinople. This statement indicates that the Armenians who are in direct contact with the Turks do not favor the type of agitation on their behalf which is carried on abroad, particularly in this country and that they realize that under present circumstances their only hope is to live at peace with the Turks. If Gerard, Cardashian, Montgomery and Company were people who could be brought to reason, I should be inclined to bring this statement to their attention but as they are not, I do not feel that such action would serve any useful purpose unless they should happen to call at the Department.

UNDER SECRETARY,  
 MAY 21 1923  
 DEPT. OF STATE

*W. H. [unclear] 267.4016  
 246*

*[Handwritten signature]*

AWD/LVD



## RECENT DOCUMENTS

THE SPEECH OF UNDERSECRETARY OF MINISTRY  
OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, AMBASSADOR ALI TUYGAN,  
DELIVERED IN THE CEREMONY FOR COMMEMORATING  
THE MARTYRS OF THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN  
AFFAIRS AND OTHER PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS AS WELL  
AS THEIR FAMILIES  
17 March 2006

Distinguished families of our beloved martyrs,  
Esteemed participants,  
Distinguished Colleagues,

Tomorrow is 18th of March, the Martyrs Day. Within this context, commemorative ceremonies are organized. Here, today, we are gathered in order to commemorate the members of our Ministry, assassinated while representing our state abroad, other public officials and their families. We clamp our hearts for the 18 March Martyrs Day at the same time.

18th of March is a very special date for our nation. It is the symbol of the struggle of existence and revival of the Turk. The Gallipoli resistance under the leadership of Great Atatürk revived the national pride and consciousness and became the indicator of our success from the trial with fire. The choice of this day, which symbolizes our rebirth from lost lives, heroism and hope with full magnificence, as the Martyrs Day is meaningful.

By the way, I respectfully bend in front of the memory of all martyrs who perceived freedom more important than their lives, who sacrificed themselves for the survival and freedom of these lands and who established the love of nation and flag to our hearts once more with their last breaths.

Distinguished families of our beloved martyrs,  
Distinguished Colleagues,

Since 1973, 39 people were martyred as a result of the attacks against our representatives in foreign countries and their families by Armenian terrorist orga-

nizations, 17 November militants and other terrorist organizations.

Today, once more, we feel the sorrow of our martyrs who had assassinated while serving for their country with honor and each of whom are of great value for us. They have an unfading memory in our hearts. The names of martyrs of the Foreign Ministry, who perceived the love of their country and their responsibility more important than their life, lives and will live in all the corners of our Ministry.

We continue to work for our country together with new generations, who are walking on the way of our martyrs with hope and determination. We are working for the ideal of placing love in the place of hatred and peace in the place of violence.

Turkish nation is sincere in its faith in peace and the efforts on this way. However, our efforts for peace should not be left unanswered.

Within this context, I want to mention that the historical offer of our country, which was proposed last year to Armenia, is still valid. We should struggle together against all negative factors contributing to the feeling of hatred, in order to establish friendship between our peoples.

Distinguished families of our beloved martyrs,  
Distinguished Colleagues,

We gave more than 200.000 martyrs in Gallipoli; we lost one generation there for our country. From the succeeding generations came many heroes. They also served this country and flag loyally. They served throughout our country as well as abroad. Some achieved martyrdom. They turned over the flag of truth, diligence and love of country to their children, brothers, sisters, to us.

Dear Colleagues,

We know that we are preserving the memories of each of our martyrs in our hearts. However, the real way to deserve their sacrifices is to work always with an infinite self-sacrifice and to make this effort the priority of our life in this period in which we are passing through a fire circle. Nobody wants us to die, however, we have to work to death. In every morning, when we start work we have to think how we can work in a more productive way. In every evening, when we turn the

lights off we have to answer the question of what we have done today for the welfare of our country in a way that we can sleep comfortably.

Membership to the family of Foreign Ministry is a life-style more than having an occupation and sacrificial working is its basic element. From the youngest to the oldest our common denominator is this. We can only make our martyrs rest in peace by this way.

We are commemorating all our martyrs who lost their life for preserving our country and independence for centuries once more with respect and gratitude. I wish God's mercy and grace for our martyrs and patience for their sorrowful families. May they rest in peace.





## RECENT DOCUMENTS

### STATEMENT BY TURKISH AMBASSADOR NABI ŞENSOY ON THE PBS PROGRAM "THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE" 18 APRIL 2006

The program "The Armenian Genocide," which aired on PBS on April 17, provides a blatantly one-sided perspective of a tragic and unresolved period of world history. Its premise is rejected not only by my Government, but also by many eminent scholars who have studied the period in question. Instead of acknowledging that this issue remains unresolved, the program reflects a self-serving political agenda by Armenian American activists who seek to silence legitimate debate on this issue and establish their spurious orthodoxy as the absolute truth.

Contrary to the program's claims, Armenian allegations of genocide have never been historically or legally substantiated. Unlike the Holocaust, the numbers, dates, facts and the context associated with this period are all contested, and objective scholars remain deeply divided. The legitimacy of this debate – and the continuing lack of consensus – was recently validated by the respected scholar Guenter Lewy, whose latest book *The Armenian Massacres in Ottoman Turkey: A Disputed Genocide* documents the incomplete historic record and excessive politicization associated with the issue.

Regrettably, the producer of "The Armenian Genocide" does not let facts get in the way of his effort to identify a scapegoat for tragedies that befell many thousands of innocents during a period of World War I when the circumstances of war, inter-communal strife, disease, famine and instability took countless lives regardless of ethnicity or religion. As a result, the program is rife with errors, misrepresentations, exaggerations and unsubstantiated conclusions, with other widely accepted facts and interpretations conveniently omitted. The lack of objectivity, however, is common practice for the film's producer, who in the past has worked with funding from Armenian Americans on similar projects and who has done little to hide his antagonism for Turkey or his bias on the sensitive matter in question. Such predilections are to be expected from this program as well, underwritten by those who subscribe to the genocide thesis and who seek to ignore or suppress evidence that would in any way contradict their view. For this reason, PBS' own Ombudsman has expressed reservations regarding the almost exclusive participation of Armenian Americans in the funding of the program.

To its credit – and in recognition of the strong bias inherent in “The Armenian Genocide” – PBS also produced a panel discussion to accompany the program consisting of experts with a range of views on this matter. Unfortunately, as the New York Times and the Wall Street Journal have reported, many PBS viewers were unable to watch the televised debate, due to the concerted efforts of Armenian American partisans who embarked on a nationwide campaign to prevent its airing by PBS affiliates. By succumbing to overt pressure by these activists and their political allies, PBS affiliates became instruments of self-censorship that should have no place in American society.

For Armenian American activists, PBS programming is just one avenue by which to silence the ongoing debate on this issue. In another recent incident, the University of Southern California cancelled an academic forum featuring two prominent Turkish experts on the matter, due to pressure by Armenian American groups that openly took credit for this heavy-handed suppression of academic expression. Meanwhile, in Massachusetts, teachers and students have been forced to go to court to preserve the presentation of alternatives to the genocide thesis in a state-mandated curriculum guide, yet another incidence of overt and unacceptable censorship driven by Armenian American activists.

It is heartening that in contrast to those running from this debate, the Turkish American community in the United States has taken up the mantle to defend America’s constitutional principle of free expression. This community and a growing constituency of friends have pressed for opening this debate to all viewpoints. As a result, in parallel to grassroots efforts to persuade PBS affiliates to air the panel discussion, over 40,000 individuals have signed a petition sponsored by the Assembly of Turkish Associations (ATAA), urging PBS to air other more balanced programs on this difficult and controversial period. In other instances when the right to undertake or express scholarly research has been threatened, Turkish Americans and organizations like the ATAA have consistently supported free and open examination of the facts.

Turkey itself has pursued the facts via numerous collaborative efforts. Last year, Prime Minister Erdoğan issued an unprecedented proposal to Armenian President Kocharian for an impartial study of the matter through the establishment of a joint historical commission, a landmark opening that has yet to receive a favorable response. And unlike U.S.C.’s recent forum cancellation, conferences on this subject are taking place in Turkey with the full support of Government leaders.

Today, Turkey and its expatriates are willing to address these sensitive unresolved matters. Yet each time an effort is made – even here in America, the world's exemplar of open and free expression – our Armenian interlocutors either run from the debate or do anything possible to quash it. Through their efforts, freedom of speech on this issue has been virtually eliminated, from the policy community to university campuses to the televisions of millions of Americans.

It is clear that until and unless the Turkish and Armenian peoples can begin an open, honest and introspective dialogue on this matter, genuine reconciliation will not commence here or in the Caucasus. The circumstances surrounding the PBS program and its airing unfortunately demonstrate that we are nowhere close to reaching a mutual understanding about our common history. Stifling debate and perpetuating a unilaterally established narrative may be expedient for some, but it will not bring about the closure that is needed to lay this difficult issue to rest.



## RECENT PUBLICATIONS

**Yıldız Deveci**

ASAM, The Research Institute for  
Crimes Against Humanity Expert  
ydeveci@iksaren.org

**Der Mythos Eines Völkermordes**

Cem Özgönül

German

317 Pages

Köln, Önel Verlag, 2006

ISBN: 3-933348-93-5

**Die andere Seite der Medallie**

Şahin Ali Söylemezoğlu

German

254 Pages

Köln, Önel Verlag, 2005

ISBN: 3-933348-86-2

**The Great Game of Genocide: Imperialism, Nationalism, And the Destruction of the Ottoman Armenians**

Donald Bloxham

English

329 Pages

University of Oxford Press, Oxford, 2005

ISBN: 0199- 2735-61

**The Treatment of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire 1915-1916: Documents Presented to Viscount Bryce (Gomidas Institute Books Series)**

James Bryce, Arnold Toynbee

English

706 Pages

Taderon, 2005

ISBN: 1903-6565-16

**The Heritage of Armenian Literature**

Agop J. Hacikyan

English

Ed: Gabriel Basmajian-Edward S. Franhuk- Nourhan Ouzounian

RECENT PUBLICATIONS

Wayne State University, 2005  
ISBN: 081-4332-218

**The Armenians: Past And Present In The Making of National Identity**

Ed: Edmund Herzig- Marina Kurkchian

English

255 Pages

Routledge/Curzon, 2005

ISBN: 070-0706-399

**Like Our Mountains: A History of Armenians in Canada**

Isabel Kaprielian-Churchill

English

625 Pages

McGill-Queen's University, 2005

ISBN: 077-3526-633

**Genocide at the Millenium: A Critical Bibliographic Review (Genocide)**

Israel W. Charny

English

New York, Transaction Pub, 2004

ISBN: 0765802635

**The Armenian Massacres in Ottoman Turkey: A Disputed Genocide**

Güenter Lewy

English

416 Pages

University of Utah Press, 2005

ISBN: 0874808499

**Armenia and the Armenians: From the Earliest Times until the Great War (1914)**

Aslan Kevrok

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New York, Adamant Media Corporation, 2005

ISBN: 1-4021-5318-X

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Christopher J. Walker

English

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I.B. Tauris, 2005

ISBN: 1860641113

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Gerald Libardian

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Transaction Publishers, 2004

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