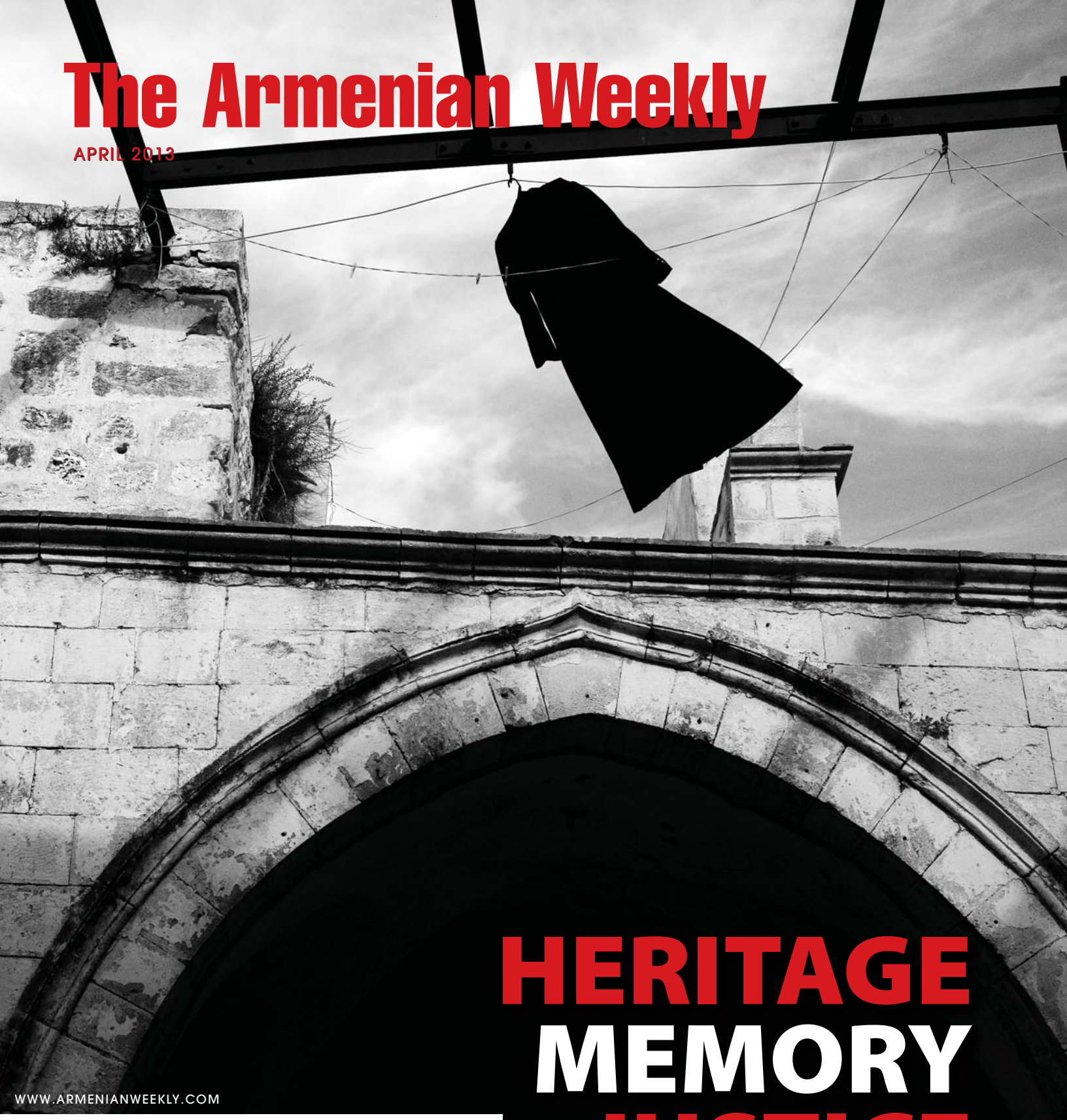
The Armenian Weekly

APRIL 2013



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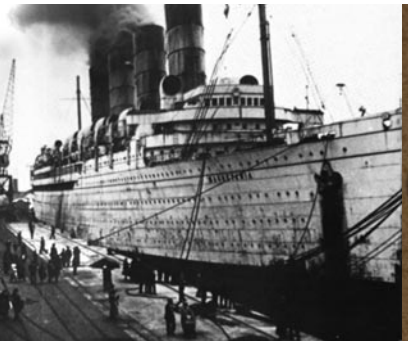


NOTES

HERITAGE

ON THE COVER:
A priest's frock dries in the sun at the Armenian abbey in Jerusalem. Thousands of Armenian refugees arrived in Jerusalem after surviving the deportations from Ottoman Turkey in 1915, seeking shelter in the convents and churches.

Photo by Kathryn Cook
Cover design by Gina Poirier Design

TOWARDS THE CENTENNIAL

DISCOURSE

The Armenian Weekly

The Armenian Weekly
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Chris Bohjalian is the author of 15 books, including the New York Times bestsellers *The Night Strangers*, *Secrets of Eden*, *Skeletons at the Feast*, *The Double Bind*, *Before You Know Kindness*, *The Law of Similars*, and *Midwives*. His work has been translated into over 25 languages and 3 times have become movies.

Sara E. Brown is a doctoral student at the Strassler Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies at Clark University. Her current research examines female agency during the Rwandan Genocide against the Tutsi.

Kathryn Cook grew up in New Mexico and graduated with a bachelor's in journalism from the University of Colorado at Boulder in 2001. Her professional career began with the Associated Press in Panama from 2003–05, after which she began to work as a freelance photographer. In 2007, she moved to Istanbul, Turkey, where she initiated a long-term project on the memory of denial of the Armenian Genocide. This project has been recognized by the Alexia Foundation, the Aftermath Project grant, the Enzo Baldoni award (Italy), and the Inge Morath award. Her work has appeared in publications including the New Yorker, the New York Times Magazine, TIME, Newsweek, U.S. News & World Report, and Stern. She is based in Rome, Italy, and represented by Agence VU'. Her book *Memory of Trees,* a journey through Armenian landscape and memory, will be published Fall 2013 in conjunction with an exhibition in Marseille.

Ayse Gunaysu is a professional translator, human rights advocate, and feminist. She has been a member of the Committee Against Racism and Discrimination of the Human Rights Association of Turkey (Istanbul branch) since 1995, and was a columnist in a pro-Kurdish daily from 2005–07. She writes a biweekly column, titled "Letters from Istanbul," for the Armenian Weekly.

Editor's Desk

Heritage, Memory, and Justice

BY KHATCHIG MOURADIAN

In 1929, the Armenian author Hamasdegh made a pilgrimage to the Syrian desert of Der Zor, which he called "that immense graveyard of our martyrs." Describing what he saw, he wrote, "It was in the immensity of that desert that I saw bleached bones and shattered skeletons, ribs ripped from spinal columns, knee caps, and skulls, all half buried in the sand. The Euphrates River had performed that interment under a cool, bone-colored moon. The flooding had formed layers, and in between the strata countless limbs and skulls, large and small skulls, stuck out."

The bones—bleached, scattered—are still there, just below the surface of the sand. After almost a century, their story, too, remains scattered in memoirs, oral histories, and archives. As we approach the centenary of the Armenian Genocide, the need to tell these stories, reflect on our relationship with them, and pursue justice for the victims and survivors acquires an even greater urgency. Commentators explore these issues in the section "Towards the Centennial."

For the sixth consecutive year, the Armenian Weekly's April Magazine tackles issues of heritage, memory, denial, and justice head on. In the section titled "Heritage," our readers will see the places and faces that still carry the scars of the genocide a century later. And in "Discourse," they will be able to look at denial in light of recent developments.

Today, April 24 also stands for the revival of a nation from the sands of the desert. Together, the articles and art presented in this magazine bear witness to that.

Marc A. Mamigonian is the Director of Academic Affairs of the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR). He is the editor of the publications Rethinking Armenian Studies (2003) and The Armenians of New England (2004) and is the author or co-author of several scholarly articles on the writings of James Joyce.

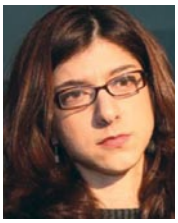
Houry Mayissian is a communications professional with journalism and public relations experiences in Dubai, Beirut, and Sydney. She has studied European politics and society at the University of Oxford, specializing on the democratic reform process in Armenia as part of its European integration. Since December 2012, she writes a monthly column titled "Building Bridges" for the Armenian Weekly.

Michael Mensoian, J.D./Ph.D, is professor emeritus in Middle East and political geography at the University of Massachusetts, Boston, and a retired major in the U.S. army. He writes regularly for the Armenian Weekly.

Suzanne Khardalian is a documentary filmmaker based in Stockholm, Sweden. Her films include "Back to Ararat," "I Hate Dogs," and "Grandma's Tattoos." She also contributes regularly to Armenian-language newspapers.

Aline Ohanesian was a 2012 finalist for the PEN Bellwether Award for Socially Engaged Fiction and The Glimmer Train Award for New Writers. Her first novel, *The Exile,* is forthcoming in 2014. She writes because humanity and its meaning-making machines, its stories, fascinate her. You can find out more about her and her fiction at www.AlineOhanesian.com.

Dr. Vahram Shemmassian is associate professor and director of the Armenian Studies Program at California State University, Northridge, and foremost scholar on Musa Dagh.



Talin Suciyan is an Armenian from Istanbul, currently based in Munich pursuing her Ph.D. She works as a teaching fellow at Ludwig Maximilian University, in the Institute of Near and Middle Eastern Studies.

Henry C. Theriault earned his Ph.D. in philosophy from the University of Massachusetts. He is currently professor in the philosophy department at Worcester State University. Since 2007, he has served as co-editor-in-chief of the peer-reviewed journal "Genocide Studies and Prevention."

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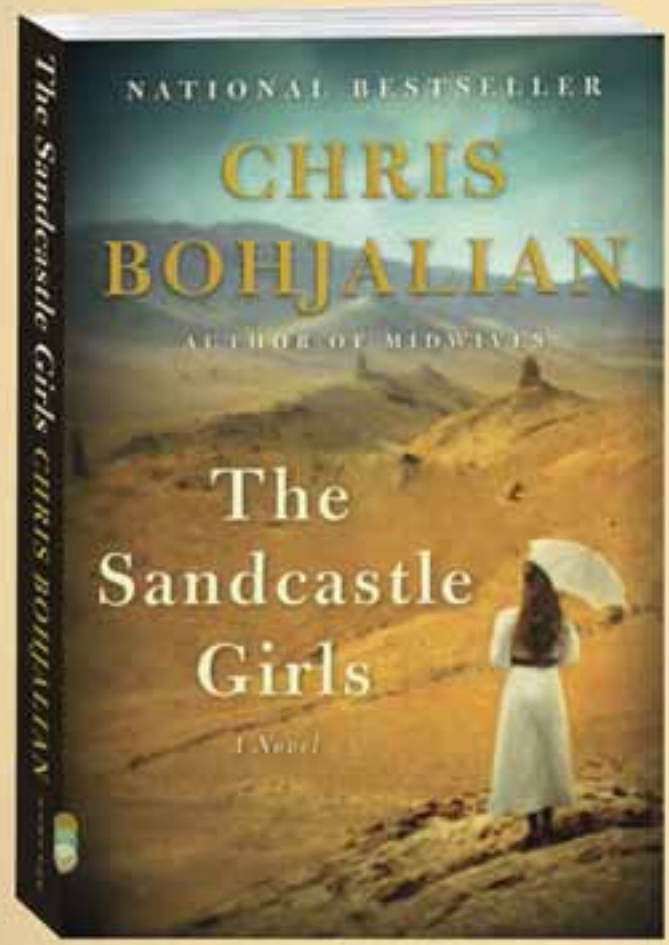

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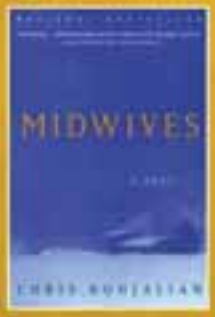

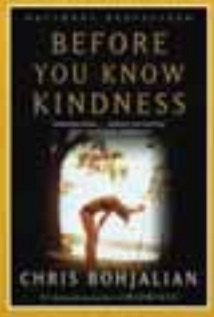

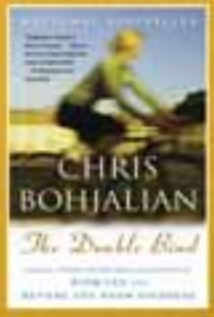

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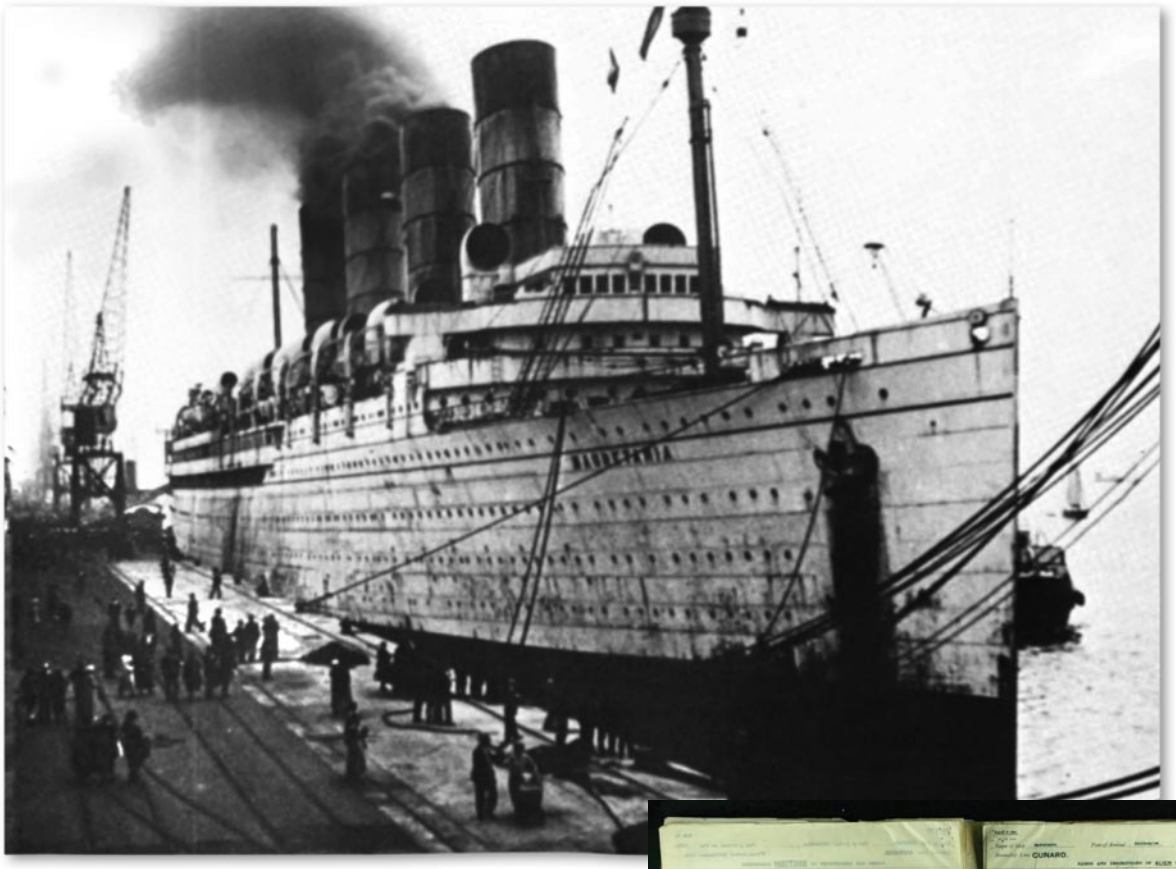
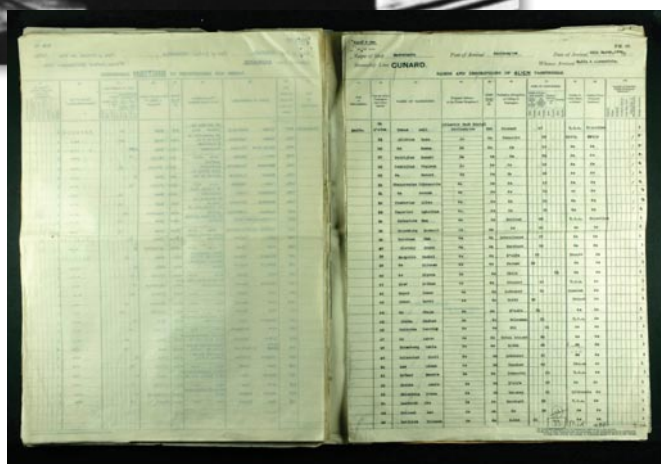
The Georgetown Girls

Reconstructing a Family History

By George Aghjayan





A copy of the passenger list with nine of the women arriving in Southampton and a picture of the ship.

Last year, I had the opportunity to travel with my family to Armenia for the first time. The highlight of the trip was visiting with my grandfather's brother's family. Upon my return, the discussions we had about our family history spurred me to revisit the genealogical research I had begun more than 20 years ago.

Nevart, Pailoon, and Sarkis; undated, but most likely in the early 1920's.

As I reviewed my files, one of the unsolved mysteries grabbed my attention—the story of my grandmother, Pailoon Demirjian, her mother Nevart, and her brother Sarkis.

I never knew my grandmother; she passed away when my father was two years old. I *did* know my great-grandmother Nevart and my great-uncle Sarkis. However, they never told me the story of surviving the death march from Diyarbakir. I only heard bits and pieces of the story from my father.

Nevart was born in Bakr Maden, and at the time of the genocide was living in Diyarbakir with her husband, Misak Demirjian, and their children, Pailoon and Sarkis. After the genocide, Nevart worked for a missionary as a cook, and Pailoon as a nanny to the missionary's young child. When the missionary was either reassigned or returned to Canada, they brought Nevart and Pailoon with them. Nevart met a man from Attleboro, Mass. and, once married, moved there. This, plus a handful of old photographs, is essentially what I knew.

When I began researching my family history, before the explosion in available information via the internet, I was never able to determine the name of the missionary. Thus, that is where things stood last summer.

I started by locating the passenger list of the ship on which Nevart and Pailoon arrived in Canada. The website Ancestry.com makes such searches fairly easy, although at times a bit of art is required with the science. Nevart and Pailoon arrived on April 28, 1930 in Quebec on the ship Ascania, sailing from Southampton, England on April 19, 1930. The ship manifest indicated that they were born in Diyarbakir, Syria, and that they were of Syrian nationality and race. Nevart was listed as a housekeeper while Pailoon was listed as a domestic. It also indicated that Sarkis remained in Beirut.

The most interesting piece of information, though, was that they were coming to Canada to see a "friend Mr. Pearce" at 103 Maria Street, Toronto. Handwritten notes indicate that Mr. Pearce's first name was John and that Nevart and Pailoon were authorized to enter Canada per a diplomatic telegram. I contacted the Canadian government archives, but they indicated such telegrams related to immigration were not retained by the archives.

I was familiar with the story of the Georgetown Boys' farm, which took in more than 100 Armenian orphan boys during the 1920's to learn agriculture. The primary person responsible for the program was Rev. Ira Pierce. Was this simply a misspelling, or was Mr. Pearce a different person?

To confirm one way or another, I decided to send the information to some friends in Canada, and asked that they check who lived at 103 Maria Street, Toronto, and where Ira Pierce had lived in 1930. A gentleman from the Zoryan Institute was copied on their replies, and he offered a startling bit of information. As it turns out, along with the Georgetown Boys' farm project, 39 Armenian women were included in a program to supply domestic servants to Canadian households. The list of 39 is included in the book on the Georgetown Boys by Jack Apramian (republished in 2009 by the Zoryan Institute). Nevart and Pailoon were numbers 33 and 34 on that list!

This opened up a history that I had never known, the story of the so-called Georgetown girls (even though few had ever actually resided at the Georgetown farm). The archives of the United Church of Canada contained 13 files on the program and an additional dossier on each of the women. Over the next week, as I was gathering information on the collection, I found a box of photos in the archives catalogue labeled "Georgetown boys," with the photos identified individually. As I scanned the list of photos, I found "#10 Nevart with our son Alan, #11 Pailoon, and #12 Sarkis." Unless it was an incredible coincidence, the photos would be of my grandmother, her mother and brother.

I ordered copies of all of the material, including the photographs, which were scanned and e-mailed to me. Indeed it was my family!

Who was the young child named Alan? How were these 39 women chosen from the thousands of Armenians in need in the

This page is sponsored by Mark and Nicole Alashaian (N.J.)

Nevart on a camel with a person identified as Mrs. Manooshag (Armenian teacher)

aftermath of the genocide? These were just some of the many questions swirling in my head.

The individual dossiers on Nevart and Pailoon did not contain much information. Pailoon's dossier dealt with the employers she worked for and some problem she was having with the unwelcome advances from a young gentleman. Nevart's file mostly contained correspondence regarding her desperate desire to bring her son, Sarkis, to Canada.

A month later, I arrived home to find a box of 500 pages worth of material. Although we had plans for that night, my wife took one look at me and said, "Sit down, read…I will make us some dinner."

A half hour in, I found what I was looking for: a letter from the wife of a professor at the American University of Beirut. The letter recommended that Nevart and Pailoon be accepted into the program, and it made reference to the three photographs that had been in the archives. The letter explained how Nevart's husband, Misak, had been conscripted into the Ottoman army and was presumed dead. After surviving the death march, Nevart had worked for American missionaries for 10 years.

The author of the letter was of Scottish ancestry, but was born and raised in Syria. She had known Rev. Pierce as a schoolgirl, and I believe that played a major role in Nevart and Pailoon being accepted into the program.

I kept reading through the material, but later did a web search for this couple. I found an article in the Daily Star, a Lebanese newspaper, about their daughter's return to Lebanon after the civil war to spread their ashes where they met and fell in love. It was now 1 o'clock in the morning, but it was still 10 o'clock on the West Coast where their daughter lived. I called and she picked up! She is now 80 years old, but was not alive at the time Nevart and Pailoon worked for her parents. Yet, she knew of the picture of Nevart with the infant Alan, who was her brother, as a similar picture was in his baby album. In fact, Alan is still alive and living in Vermont! Later, I would have a chance to speak with Alan as well and thank him for all his family had done for Nevart and Pailoon.

There is more to the story, but very little has been written about these 39 women. Over the following weeks, I became obsessed with gathering information about them. I found that two of them had passed away only recently, and was frustrated in having missed an opportunity to speak with them.

I was able to find the list of passenger arrivals into Canada for 35 of the 39 women. One of the women was born in Canada. The program started slowly with two sisters arriving in 1926. It took 3 more years for the next 18 women to arrive before the Canadian government finally agreed to allow a group of 9 women to come. It was this group that Nevart and Pailoon were in.

This group of nine left Haifa and arrived in Southampton in March 1930. While the rest of the group were allowed to continue to Canada, Nevart and Pailoon were held in Southampton; the problem was that Nevart did not have proof that she was widowed. The issue was finally resolved and they were allowed to depart three weeks later.

This would prove to be the only large group of women allowed into Canada as part of the program. The Georgetown Boys' farm was no longer housing the Armenian orphan boys and Rev. Pierce had taken on a new role in Montreal.

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Throughout this endeavor, Rev. Pierce was in a delicate position. On the one hand, he had a lengthy history as an advocate for Armenians. On the other hand, he understood the stringent conditions the Canadian immigration department placed on him, and how the entire program could be compromised when the women diverged from these rules. It took Rev. Pierce years to break through the mentality that "certain races and classes of people…are never likely to be much of an asset to Canada." [4 January 1926 letter from Deputy Minister of Immigration]

The struggles Armenians were subjected to following the genocide is often forgotten. They were refugees without valid citizenship or passports and, thus, could not travel freely. Canada, like other countries, feared that accepting the Armenian refugees could not be reversed, as there was no country to deport those ultimately found to be unsatisfactory. The so-called Nansen passports were insufficient. Thus, a valid passport, as well as $175 to cover travel expenses, was required of each of these girls.

The Canadian government was also concerned with being a "back door" entry to the United States. This was the cause for objections by Rev. Pierce, often viewed as unfair by the Armenian community, to the potential marriage of some of the women.

The full list of conditions required to secure approval of the potential immigrants follows:

1. **The women must be able to meet the passport regulations and pass medical inspection.**
2. **The women should not have first or second degree relatives in the United States, and no relatives at all in Canada.**
3. **Any women who had a relative that had not fulfilled their obligations under either the Georgetown boys farm or working as a domestic would also be barred from admittance. On the other hand, every consideration would be given to those women who had relatives still employed in these occupations.**
4. **The women would be placed in domestic service under the supervision and responsibility of the Board of Evangelism and Social Services of the United Church of Canada.**
5. **The women should not have other family members remaining in the country whence they came.**

Left: Pailoon with the child she cared for. Right: Nevart, Sarkis, unknown man, and Pailoon on the eve of leaving Beirut in 1930.

It occurs to me that my great-grandmother failed on numerous of these points. First, she had left a son behind in Syria in a French-run school. She had a sister living in the United States. Ultimately, she married a U.S. citizen and moved to the United States, thus using Canada as a back door entry.

As one reads through the various papers, the sense of desperation of families trying to reunite, of those grasping for a positive future away from the orphanages, the refugee camps is palpable. There are also numerous letters from those looking for Armenian women to work as domestics, often in response to articles written by Rev. Pierce in an effort to gain widespread interest in their work for the benefit of Armenians.

There are many layers to the connections between those involved with the Georgetown girls. Rev. Pierce and his wife had been in Kharpert as the genocide unfolded. Margaret Campbell was a nurse also in Kharpert at the time of the genocide who was brought to the Georgetown Boys' farm as a matron and who adopted one of the girls brought to Canada. Maria Jacobson, Henry Riggs, Martha Frearson, and Elizabeth Kunzler are all names that will be familiar to many for their work with Armenian refugees, and all also worked closely with Rev. Pierce in attempting to bring worthy Armenian girls to Canada.

Today, it is difficult to fully comprehend the meaning of such things. But even with many obstacles, the story of the Georgetown girls changed the lives of 39 Armenian women and their families forever. □

This page is sponsored by Marian Amiraian (N.Y.) in loving memory of her parents

The Whisper of Silent Stones

By Aline Ohanesian

Left: Engraved Stone adorning a home in what used to be the Armenian district of Sivas/Sepastia. Right: Repurposed Headstone in the village of Pirkinik, since renamed Cayboyu, is the only evidence left of this Armenian Catholic village.

Two years ago, when I decided to visit Turkey to do some research for my upcoming novel, people couldn't wait to give me tips on what to see and do. They would inevitably describe the splendor of Istanbul's many wonders, or the beauty of the Aegean coast. I would listen politely before informing them that I was going to Turkey to see Sivas, a landlocked province located in the middle of the country, where no tourist would purposely go. Once an important stop on the Silk Route, Sivas, known to Armenians as Sepastia, is by today's standards, "off the beaten path."

My novel, *The Exile*, a story about a young Turkish man discovering the secrets of his family's and his country's past is set against the Armenian Genocide and takes place in Sivas. I wanted to see the place for myself, smell the air and touch the earth that my characters inhabited. Yet, this was not a very good time to be poking one's nose in the nation's past. It was May 2011. The June 12 elections were only a few weeks away and the country's nationalistic and conservative factions were grappling for power. The PKK had, only one week earlier, tried to bomb the caravan carrying the prime minister. Turkey's long history of tension with its minorities could be viewed on every page of the Hurriyet Daily, from the front page to the arts section. The journey seemed even more dangerous considering that the assassination of Hrant Dink was still being "investigated."

Above: House with triangular stone in what used to be the Armenian district of Sivas/Sepastia. Below: Armenian headstone repurposed in village of Pirkinik, since renamed Cayboyu.

I put on a brave front, but deep down I was filled with fear. My upbringing in a private Armenian nationalist school in California had taught me that most Turks were either completely uninformed or, worse, were more or less intent on destroying anything Armenian. Only one month earlier, on April 24, the commemorative day of the genocide, a young Armenian man serving in the Turkish Army had been killed. Everyone in the United States and even some friends in Istanbul tried to persuade me against the visit. Some used fear as a deterrent, others boredom, saying, "There's nothing to see there."

Once I made up my mind to go, I had to find a suitable translator and guide. When Deniz, a Turkish historian I met online, volunteered, I was very suspicious. Why would a Turkish woman, a perfect stranger, go out of her way and take a seven-hour bus ride from Ankara to Sivas, just to help an Armenian-American novelist? Paranoia set in as friends warned me that she could be a government informant. After all, writing about the genocide was a clear violation of Article 301 of the penal code, a broad law forbidding anyone to "insult Turkishness."

I'm ashamed to admit that visions of Turkish jail cells and scenes from "Midnight Express" kept me awake at night until I finally asked Deniz why she was willing to help me. Her reasons were as varied as the ones that inspired me to write my book. They ranged from the personal to the political, and back again. Deniz had good reason to believe that her maternal grandmother was a converted Armenian, a survivor of the genocide who had hid her identity first from the government and then from her family. As a historian, Deniz was committed to unveiling the past and arriving at a truth unbridled by nationalist narratives. In a country where having Armenian blood carries a huge social and political stigma, and pursuing historical narratives that contradict the government's version of the past is punishable by law, Deniz's decision to help me was humbling.

When my husband and I stepped off the plane in Sivas, Deniz and her fiancé were there to greet us. After a few reassuring smiles and awkward embraces, we boarded the only bus to Sivas City. In the lobby of our hotel, over a hot cup of coffee, I admitted to Deniz that I had never had, and never expected to have, a Turkish friend. She smiled and admitted the same. We agreed to embark on a journey into our shared past with open hearts and minds. We spent the next few days together, with Deniz and her fiancé acting as my guides and translators, and with my husband acting as photographer.

According to historians, the Armenian population of Sivas before World War I was upwards of 70,000. Today there are approximately 60 individuals left, only 1 of whom can speak Armenian. Some of these inhabitants were old enough to witness the deterioration and demolition of every church from 1942 to the last one in 1978. Along the small shops located in the center of the city, Deniz led me to an old friend of her father's, an Armenian man who could no longer speak the language but who could trace his family's roots in Sivas back to 1895. When we asked him what it was like for Armenians in Sivas now, he said that things were fine, but added, "People were more civilized before. They used to live together more harmoniously. It is getting worse."

He drew us a map of the old Armenian quarter, including the location of his now-abandoned family home, where until a decade ago his mother still lived. Women in headscarves stared at us from porches and stoops. Dust-covered children on rusty bikes followed

I'm ashamed to admit that visions of Turkish jail cells and scenes from 'Midnight Express' kept me awake at night until I finally asked Deniz why she was willing to help me.

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us, practicing the few English phrases they knew. We found the old man's house locked, the ocher-colored exterior walls leaning away from a purple flowered tree. Next door a squatter had left a half-eaten bowl of rice in the courtyard.

After walking for some time in this old Armenian district, we found another dilapidated old house that stood out both in terms of stature and size as well as architecture. There was something familiar and haunting about the structure. The minute I saw it, I knew it was the imagined home of my novel's protagonist, Lucine: a two-story Victorian construct with a large porch flanked by four columns and eight paneless windows. Inside was a parlor, or foyer, with four doors leading to the various rooms, one with an aging but still magnificent mural. It stood hollowed out, gutted and forlorn, dwarfed on all four sides by apartment buildings built in the last 30 years. Surrounding it were a hundred balconies sporting satellite dishes and the day's laundry hung out to dry.

At the very top was a triangular stone with a decorative relief. On it the date 1890 appeared in Arabic numerals, with the same date written in Ottoman in the right corner. In the top corner, above all this, was the Armenian letter "E." Deniz, who is fluent in modern and Ottoman Turkish, asked me to explain the inscription. I told her that this letter, found upon almost all altars of Armenian churches, is the seventh letter of the Armenian alphabet and has great meaning for Armenians. It means, "God is here." This was undoubtedly an Armenian Christian house. The house was clearly the upper class home of a once prominent Armenian family. Did they abandon it or were they forced out in 1915? There is no one left who can answer that question. It took an Armenian novelist and a Turkish scholar to decode the structure's partial history. Without Deniz, I would never have found the old Armenian district, much less this house. And without me, Deniz would never have known that the structure was evidence of the province's vanished Armenian citizens.

The four of us stood helplessly in front of the dilapidating structure, wishing to capture and preserve it. A strange aura of mourning precipitated the space between our bodies as we struggled with the idea that a handful of Armenians and this abandoned house are all that's left of a once thriving community of 70,000 Christians, 7 churches, and 1 monastery.

The next day we drove to the village of Cayboyu. Once known as Pirkinik, Cayboyu is the birthplace of Daniel Varoujan, the beloved Armenian poet who was killed during the genocide. Before World War I, Pirkinik was almost entirely made up of Armenian Catholics. Today, it is a quaint little village where cows are more prevalent than villagers. The smell of cow dung being burned for fuel permeated the air and the ground was covered in mud. We combed the cemetery for Armenian headstones but could not find one. There wasn't a single hint left of the people who built and lived in the village. Rain started pouring down on our heads. Village girls scrambled to round the cows towards shelter. Disappointed, we were heading back toward the car when I noticed a polished white marble stone ensconced in a cement building. Upon closer examination, I could tell it was a headstone. The Armenian inscription gave the owner's name as well as the dates of his birth and death, "1861." Once again, I translated for my new Turkish friends. We stood in the rain, the four of us, a pair of Armenians and a pair of Turks, in front of this polished white marble stone, and paid our respects. It was a four-person memorial to all those who were killed or driven from this land, as well as those whose history had been systematically erased. We honored them together and swore that we four, at least, would never forget this shared experience.

We stood in the rain, the four of us, a pair of Armenians and a pair of Turks, in front of this polished white marble stone, and paid our respects. It was a four-person memorial to all those who were killed or driven from this land, as well as those whose history had been systematically erased.

Back in the center of town, vans sporting the faces of the two main political candidates circled the main square, blaring propaganda from speakers into the street. Turkish flags hung from every building and waved above our heads on every street. Deniz and her fiancé hung their heads in exhaustion and despair. We had escorted them into a time machine of sorts, and together we had uncovered a disappearing and denied past. Finding these structures seemed like a small victory at the time, but as I returned to my novel and Deniz returned to her research, we both felt the weight of those silent forgotten stones. Those crumbling buildings, abandoned by time and memory, were calling out to us, demanding that their occupants be remembered. □

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SAMATYA (RAYMOND KEVORKIAN, *ERMENILER*, ARAS YAYINCILIK, 2012)

A HISTORY OF A PERFECT CRIME[1]

By Talin Suciyan

I spent my high school years in Samatya. The majority of my classmates were the children of the Armenians who had come to Istanbul from the provinces during the republican years.

We were allowed to go out during our lunch breaks. Many of the students lived in Samatya and could go home for lunch. Yet, in the early 1990's, when the political tension in the country reached its peak, because of the Kurdish issue, we were no longer allowed to go outside the school grounds during lunch breaks.

Although we used to work hard to not only be good citizens but the "best citizens"—we took compulsory national security classes taught by a high-ranking military officer, and would do our military exercises in the schoolyard so loud that half the district would hear our voices—it never guaranteed our security.

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In those years, constant bomb warnings were proof of our insecurity. After each warning, we would go out to the schoolyard until the entire school was searched. Sometimes we would be asked to go home early. We hardly had any idea why a bomb would be planted in our school. No one would put these bomb warnings into context. There was nothing to understand; it was just like that. And so we got used to these warnings, along with the changing security measures that were an ordinary part of our school life.

During my doctoral research, I read Armenian newspapers from the 1930's and had the chance to look at Samatya from a different perspective. Samatya was one of the districts where *kaghtagayan*s were established. *Kaghtagayan*s were *kaghtagan* (deportee or IDP) centers that hosted thousands of Armenians from the provinces. These centers functioned until the end of the 1930's. Armenian newspapers published in Istanbul in the 1920's and 1930's were full of reports on the *kaghtagan*s' severe conditions in these centers, where they often had to live on top of one another. The community in Istanbul was responsible for providing food, work, and a sustainable life for these people. Yet, it was not easy, as the financial means of the community were shortened to a great extent, the court cases for saving its properties continued, and its legal status was in the process of complete eradication. And still, Armenians whose living conditions in the provinces were systematically decimated continued to come to Istanbul.

Armenians who remained in the provinces were threatened in several ways. Arshag Alboyaciyan referred to these attacks in his book *Badmut'iwn Malatio Hayots'*:

'In 1924, Armenians were leaving en masse since a group of attackers—15 people—were raiding their houses asking for money and jewels, beating them up, almost to death. This organization was called Ateshoglu Yildirim . . .

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Panper Weekly, April 27, 1933

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Panper Weekly, April 27, 1933

They would put signs on the houses of Armenians and tell them to leave within 10 days . . . One day, they put a sign on the main church, giving Armenians five days to leave; otherwise, they said, 'Ateshoglu Yildirim would burn you all.'[2]

Armenians understood that the organization was trying to intimidate them into leaving in order to obtain their properties, along with the other *Emval-i Metruke* (Abandoned Properties).[3] In November 1923, two prominent Armenians, on behalf of 35 Armenians from Malatya, sent a letter to Mustafa Kemal, asking for security and the right to live in their houses. They wrote that if their citizenship was not recognized and they were required to leave, that this should be told to them officially, and not by raiding their houses.[4] The letter did not have a positive impact; on the contrary, the signatories were asked to leave the country, and the 35 families had to follow them.[5] Over the following months, Armenians continued to leave Malatya to Syria or to Istanbul. I first came across the Ateshoglu Yildirim cases through an oral history project I conducted for my doctoral research. My interviewee said there were others in Istanbul who could talk about this organization and its raids. He contacted one family, they said yes, but then changed their minds. It was during the same time that Maritsa Küçük, an elderly Armenian women, was brutally killed, two others were severely beaten, and another attacked in Samatya. The atmosphere of fear was once again at its peak for the Armenians, and I decided to stall my research on the topic.

Yozgat, Amasya, Sinop, Ordu, Tokat, Kayseri, Diyarbakır, Sivas . . . And so it continued—Armenians were systematically forced out of Asia Minor and northern Mesopotamia throughout the republican years. They were essentially forced to come to Istanbul,

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looking for shelter, food, work, and a secure life, following the Settlement Law of 1934; sometimes through extraordinary decrees ordering them to leave a certain place and be settled in another; through racist attacks that occurred on a daily basis; or simply through the state's refusal to open Armenian schools in the provinces, which was one of the "guaranteed rights" of the Lausanne Treaty of 1923.

Armenians who came to Istanbul remained at the bottom of all hierarchies. They were caught helpless between the institutional power structures of the Armenian community in Istanbul and the state. The latter cared about them the least. These centers were closed at the end of the 1930's; yet, Armenians continued to come to Istanbul from the provinces throughout the republican era, and their socio-economic problems occupied the agenda of the community for quite some time.

An Armenian suspect was recently arrested for the murder of Maritsa Küçük and for the other attacks on elderly women in Samatya. On the same day, the Turkish media covered the arrest with a news item, disseminated by the police,[6] implying that since the suspect was Armenian, no racism was involved. Hence, the issue has been resolved.

We know that law has little to do with truth or justice. On the contrary, the mechanisms of law create substitutes for truth or justice. The cases of Pınar Selek, Hrant Dink, Sevag Balıkçı, along with the murder of Maritsa Küçük and the other attacks in Samatya, remind us of not only the impossibility of justice, but also the perfection of a crime, which continues to silence the witnesses.[7] □


1 Mayıs 1933
Sayı 6

Panper Weekly, April 27, 1933

ENDNOTES

1. This article is a revised and expanded version of Malatya, Yozgat, Ordu ve Samatya," published in Radikal İki, March 2, 2013.
2. Arshag Alboyaciyan, *Badmutiwn Malatio Hayots'* (Beirut: Dbaran Sevan, 1961), pp. 966–967.
3. For Emval-ı Metruke See Nevzat Onaran, *Emval-ı Metruke: Osmanlı'da ve Cumhuriyette Ermeni ve Rum Mallarının Türleştirilmesi* (Istanbul: Belge Yay, 2010), Uğur Ümit Üngör, *Confiscation and Destruction: The Young Turk Seizure of Armenian Property* (Continuum Publ., 2011), Taner Akçam and Ümit Kurt, *Kanunların Ruhu*, (Istanbul: İletişim Publ., 2012).
4. Alboyaciyan, *Badmut'iwn Malatio Hayots'*, p. 967.
5. Ibid.
6. See the press release of the Istanbul branch of the Human Rights Organization of Nov. 3, 2013, after meeting Murat Nazaryan.
7. See Jean-Françis Lyotard, *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute.* transl. Georges van den Abbeele (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), p. 14.

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THE EXODUS

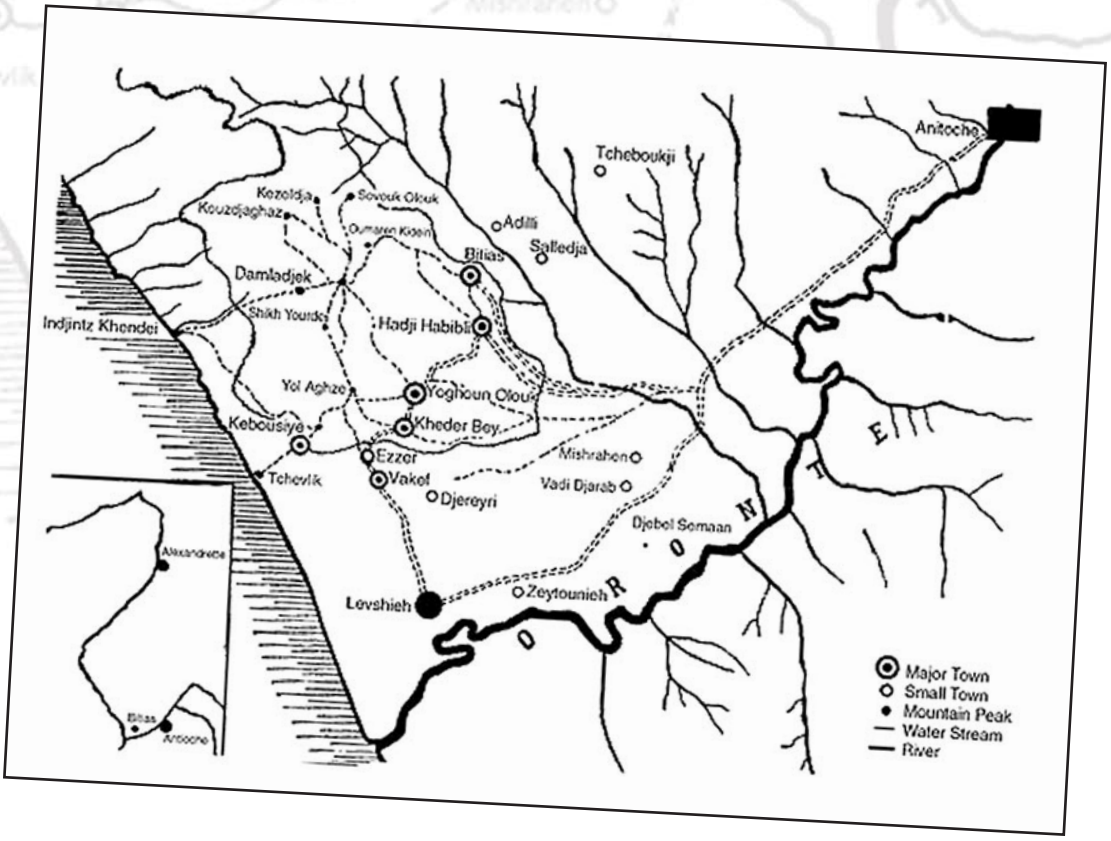
The Sanjak of Alexandretta/Iskenderun was an autonomous province within Syria during the interwar years. Its inhabitants included a significant number of Armenian natives and refugees, among them the indigenous population of Musa Dagh near Antioch. A political crisis beginning in 1936 shook Sanjak society to its core, as winds of change from a French mandate to Turkish suzerainty increasingly caused panic. The turmoil grew to alarming proportions for the Arabs, Alawites, and Christians when a farcical "election" in the summer of 1938 installed a Turkish majority in the Sanjak's legislature. A year later Turkey annexed the area. This was the final straw that compelled the overwhelming majority of Armenians, among other groups, to seek refuge in other parts of Syria as well as Lebanon, refusing to live under Turkish rule.

During the period between the summer of 1938 and the summer of 1939, socioeconomic life in Musa Dagh deteriorated rapidly. Exports and imports from and into the Sanjak were drastically reduced. Merchants conducting business with Aleppo were obliged to deposit with the Hatay government a sum equal to the value of their merchandise as collateral. After selling the goods the merchants had to convert the Syrian lira into the Turkish lira to be able to carry their money back into the Sanjak. The merchants were able to regain only 70 percent of the collateral they had deposited at the time of export, that is to say, the government kept 30 percent as tax on profits, in addition to customs fees. As a result, unemployment in Musa Dagh rose to 90 percent. Construction was halted. Artisans sold their merchandize for 25 percent less, and bought other necessities for 25 percent more. Poverty and misery became rampant.

Beginning in late spring 1939, Turkish police posts were set up in and near the Armenian villages. There was also an attempt to establish Turkish Halkevleri (nationalistic people's houses, i.e., clubs) with the help of Armenian collaborators, described as "paid enthusiastic Kemalist propagandist agents." They reported regularly on compatriots who remained opposed to the emergent

OF MUSA DAGH ARMENIANS

By Vahram Shemmassian



FROM THE SANJAK OF ALEXANDRETTA TO ANJAR, LEBANON

Turkish regime, and even sent representatives to propagandize about the Sanjak (then called the Hatay Republic) among Musa Dagh expatriates in Aleppo, Damascus, and Beirut.

When in April 1939 two French senators, who were also members of the French Mediterranean Committee opposed to the Sanjak's annexation to Turkey, visited Musa Dagh, they received an immense popular reception. After their departure, a number of Armenians were arrested. Serop Sherbetjian was sacked from his Musa Dagh governorship position. Tateos Babigian from Vakef replaced him as an appointee of the Turkish regime in Antioch.

On June 30, 1939, the Armenian National Union (ANU) in Beirut sent High Commissioner Gabriel Puaux a letter signed by the political and religious leaders, including the Primate of the Aleppo Ardavazt Surmeyian. In it, they expressed with sadness the fact that efforts in Paris had failed to save the Sanjak; that the Armenians and especially those of Musa Dagh would be the biggest losers; that they wanted to live under French protection given Turkey's record of persecutions and massacres; that the Musa Daghians must be settled as a group in a mountainous area in Lebanon reminiscent of Musa Dagh and affording agricultural opportunities; and that France should assume the transportation expenses.

Four days later, on July 4, Bishop Surmeiyan sent Puaux a letter, saying that since "the question of selling their [the Musa Daghians'] houses is dead," they should at least be allowed to carry their movable belongings. He similarly asked that the goods be inspected when packed in the villages rather than at the border customs to avoid long lines and undue delays, that laissez-passers be issued free of charge, and so on.

When Col. Philibert Collet, the French officer in charge of the Armenians' exodus, heard rumors that the Musa Daghians were contemplating burning their homes before departure, he issued a call for them to leave their doors open and their homes and orchards intact. Those rumors proved unfounded.

Collet similarly instructed Khat Achabahian, prelate of the Sanjak Armenians, to form special committees to determine the number of persons and livestock, and the weight of movable belongings that would be transported. The Musa Dagh survey revealed the following results: 1,272 families or 7,888 persons, 3,232 animals, and 781 tons of luggage. These figures were later adjusted at the Ras al-Basit encampment as follows: 1,204 families (68 families less), 5,125 persons (2,763 persons less), approximately 1,850 tons of goods (nearly 2.5 times more than the initial amount). The reasons for these changes will be discussed in a more comprehensive study.

THOSE WHO STAYED BEHIND

Not all Armenians elected to leave Musa Dagh. Such cases numbered 68 families or 384 persons, constituting about 6 percent of Musa Dagh's total population. The breakdown was as follows: 4 families/12 persons in Bitias; 1 family/8 persons in Haji Habibli; 4 families/28 persons in Yoghunoluk; 4 families/27 persons in Kheder Beg; 3 families/15 persons in Kabusiye; 11 families/64 persons in Zeituniye in the nearby plain of Svedia; and 41 families/232 persons in Vakef. Most of these families lived together as a group in Vakef. Presently Vakef is showcased as the sole Armenian village left in Turkey.

They stayed behind for several reasons. To begin with, these Armenians believed that they could live peacefully and harmoniously in republican Turkey (intense Turkish propaganda aided in shaping this favorable opinion). Second, it was emotionally and psychologically difficult for them to abandon their ancestral lands (this torment certainly applied to those who elected to depart, as well). Third, they entertained the false hope that they would be able to acquire the fixed properties abandoned by those who left. Fourth, they belonged to a political faction—mainly members and sympathizers of the Social Democrat Hnchakian Party—that had failed to break the Armenian Revolutionary Federation's (ARF) hold on the governance of Musa Dagh during the interwar years. Therefore, by staying they would be able to rid themselves of the ARF's dominance. That being said, most others with similar anti-ARF sentiments still decided to leave the area.

THE EXODUS

The exodus from Musa Dagh took place from July 15-20, 1939. The goods were shipped by boat to Ras al-Basit, between Kesab and Latakia; the women, children, and the elderly rode trucks and buses, and the men walked, some of them accompanying the animals. Turkish soldiers manning border checkpoints inspected the goods strictly in search of weapons, especially. Some Turkish civilians attacked the caravans and stole about 340 animals, killed 4 pigs, and took 330 Syrian liras. Turkish gendarmes succeeded in retrieving just 63 animals, and only a fraction of the money.

When the refugees arrived at the Armenian enclave of Kesab, the locals welcomed them with open arms by offering food, water, and tan (yogurt juice). Then, at Qastal Muaf, en route to Ras al-Basit, they were vaccinated against typhoid.

THE CAMP AT RAS AL-BASIT

The first batch of refugees arrived at Ras al-Basit on July 18 and camped in the open, as no shelter was available. As the rest began to join them, they congregated in groups according to their villages. Families built sheds with branches and whatever materials they could muster, and hoisted the French flags on them. They made water sources in the immediate vicinity operational with pumps, and opened ditches just 50 meters away from the camp to be used as restrooms. This unsanitary arrangement attracted "millions" of flies, which caused serious health problems. The women cooked food outdoors, while the men herded the animals and opened makeshift stores. People commuted to Latakia to purchase necessities. The French government paid 25 Syrian liras per adult and 10 liras per child under the age of 10 beginning on Aug. 7.

Social life resumed to some degree. The various denominations in each village-grouping worshipped in their respective "churches." The political parties held their own meetings. Some voluntary associations likewise tried to keep a semblance of normalcy. For

The Armenian Apostolic St. Paul Church in Anjar. Photo by Nare Yessayi Havatian.

example, the annual meeting of the Union of Former Légion Arménienne Combatants took place on Aug. 24 in the presence of 173 members. An executive committee was elected unanimously. A report of activities read revealed the type and amount of donations that the Union had received beginning in the second half of 1938 from the Syrian Armenian Relief Cross in Aleppo (one box of medicines), and Union affiliates in France (1,600 FF) and the United States ($240).

A Central Relief Committee approved by the French and Vicar General Bedros Sarajian of the Catholicosate of Cilicia at Antelias, Lebanon, managed all refugee affairs. The Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU) Central Executive in Paris cooperated by forming an Extraordinary Central Fundraising Committee on July 21. In turn, the Harach (meaning "forward," in Armenian) newspaper in Paris made its front pages available to publish the lists of donors from Europe and North Africa. Compatriots from the United States likewise contributed.

Due to the unsanitary living conditions, disease increased to an alarming degree, afflicting children especially. Torrential rains from Aug. 22–24 soaked the campers and exacerbated the situation. Collet sent 12 tents to shelter the children. A French military doctor established a six-bed infirmary. An Armenian pharmacist from Aleppo donated 100 Syrian liras worth of medicines. A maternity with 20 beds was also opened in Latakia with a midwife sent by the Syrian Armenian Relief Cross; by Aug. 30, some 180 sick and elderly people were admitted. A French military health inspector, upon visiting Ras al-Basit, ordered the transfer of some 60 sick children together with their mothers to Beirut to be placed under the care of the Armenian National Union (ANU). The government-run trade school building was placed under the ANU's disposal, with its chair and Lebanese Armenian Relief Cross representative, Dr. Onnig Gergerian, managing it.

IN SEARCH OF A FINAL SETTLEMENT SITE

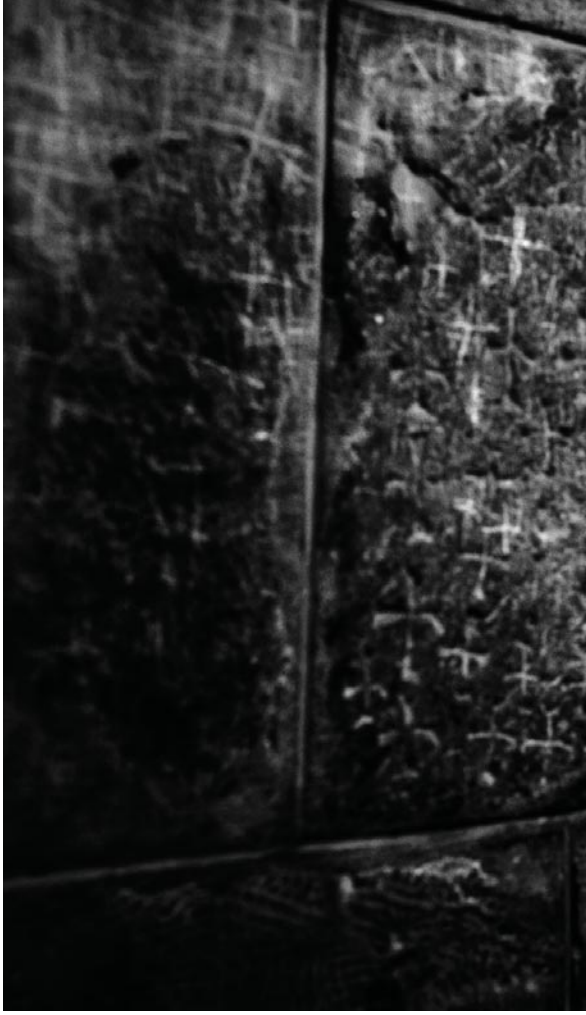
The Turkish government asked the French to refrain from installing the Armenians near the Syrian-Turkish border. The French obliged, and initially considered four possible sites in Lebanon: (1) in the mountains overlooking Tripoli, especially around the villages of Sir and Bakhune; (2) in the district of Hermel, along the Orontes River; (3) in the west of Baalbek, around the villages of Shemestar, Hadith, and Budaye; (4) in south Lebanon, in the foothills of Hermon, between the cities of Marjayun and Rashaya. Hermel was regarded as the most suitable, not only because of the available land, but also because the Armenians "would constitute a moderating element and a factor of appeasement, in a corner which troubles, permanently, the dissentions between Christians and non-Christians." For various reasons, however, none of these places were selected.

The High Commission ultimately negotiated with a retired Turkish military officer named Rushdi Hoja Tuma, who owned a 1,540 hectare domain at a place called Anjar in the Bekaa valley. Although Rushdi Bey asked for 10 million FF, he was willing to accept, out of "patriotic sentiments," an "important reduction" if the Turkish government asked him to. The land was purchased at a reduced price.

TO ANJAR

The relocation from Ras al-Basit to Anjar took place from Sept. 3–16. The refugees were sent to Tripoli by ship, and then to Riyaq by train, where they received food, fruit, and refreshments from a local Armenian reception team. From Riyaq, they were transported aboard trucks to their final destination of Anjar. This was a rocky and thorny terrain with no dwellings whatsoever. Because the refugees received an inadequate number of tents (accommodating 12 people each), ordinary linen was additionally distributed for the uprooted to make their own shelters. As in Ras al-Basit, here, too, the population stuck together in compact groups according to their villages of origin. Given the inhospitable geographical milieu, scores fell ill and/or died. With the cold winter fast approaching, some 1,778 women and children were dispersed among 14 villages and towns in the general vicinity and housed in vacant buildings or among Christian families with accommodation possibilities. The men in turn stayed at Anjar to construct stone dwellings that the French had planned. The original project would give each family a house comprised of 2 rooms, a kitchen, and a restroom on a 400 sq. meter lot. But as France entered World War II, and with its finances earmarked for that effort, the original plan was reduced to a single room with an outdoor restroom. Each adult male received an addition parcel of land for farming. By spring 1940, the Armenians occupied their new houses. The three religious communities (Apostolic, Evangelical, and Catholic) in turn received specific plots within the village for their churches and schools. A new life in a new country thus began to take shape for the Armenians from Musa Dagh.

Today Anjar is a beautiful 73-year-old thriving town with all kinds of community facilities and businesses. Yet, given the political turmoil in the Middle East, its future status and that of the Armenian communities in the region as a whole remain tenuous at best. □



1. An Armenian woman attends a service at the Holy Mother of God Armenian Church in Vakifli, Turkey. About 30 Armenian families populate the small town and surrounding area, which is located near the Turkish border with Syria. Although Armenians are allowed to celebrate their traditions in Turkey, many fear asserting their ethnic origins, which means living in near silence to avoid trouble.
2. A field is seen just outside of Erzerum, Turkey, along an infamous deportation route that led Armenians south toward the Kemah Gorge. According to eyewitness accounts and historical documentation, very few deportees survived this deportation route.
3. A group of boys catch fish in the Tigris River, just beyond the ancient city gates. According to historical sources from the Patriarchate in Constantinople, approximately 106,000 Armenians once inhabited the district of Diyarbakir and 15,000 in the city itself before the genocide. Eyewitness accounts describe the attacks and massacres that took place as Armenians were deported on rafts down the Tigris River.

4 A visitor to the Holy Sepulchre Church in Jerusalem runs his hand across the crosses that pilgrims have engraved on a wall in the Armenian section of the church. Thousands of Armenian refugees arrived in Jerusalem after surviving the deportations from Ottoman Turkey in 1915.

5 Snow blankets the countryside along a road between Van and Dogubayazit, Turkey, close to the border with present-day Armenia. After the deportation decree of April 24, 1915, almost all of the Armenian communities in the area were wiped out.

6. A small child plays in the rubble of Sancak (Sanjak) camp in the Bourj Hamoud district of Beirut, Lebanon. Sancak was originally an Armenian refugee camp and is now a very poor neighborhood. In 2008, the municipality demolished a part of the camp in hopes of eventually building a modern shopping and apartment building in its place.

7. Children play in the courtyard of the old Ihlasiye Madresesi, or religious school, in Bitlis, Turkey. Bitlis's population was half Armenian before 1915, when the Russians advanced on the town and the Ottoman Turks emptied it of Armenians, most of whom were massacred.

8. Tables and chairs are set up before the start of an Armenian celebration in Vakifli, Turkey. In 1915, about 5,000 Armenian inhabitants of Vakifli and 6 other nearby villages defended themselves and resisted Ottoman troops until they were rescued by a French naval ship and taken to Egypt. It was only many years later that some of their relatives returned to Vakifli to live again.

Why Should We Even Talk about the Genocide?

The memory of the Armenian Genocide as a moral compass

By Suzanne Khardalian

Armenians worldwide have felt an increasing desire to see the story of the Armenian Genocide on the big screen. We all want our "Schindler's List," our "Sophie's Choice."

I have heard many arguments about the importance of making movies (I myself have discussed the necessity of telling some of the countless stories of the genocide); yet, we have never asked ourselves, "Why should we even talk about the genocide?" If the answer is just to satisfy our need for entertainment, then maybe a feature film is good enough, or maybe even more than enough.

But the story and the memory of the genocide are about something else; there's another, larger purpose. While we remember the atrocities every year on April 24, we do it mechanically and dutifully. A faint feeling of obligation surfaces. And the best argument one often comes up with is that it would be disrespectful *not* to remember, not to commemorate. Maybe, but the problem is that this mechanical response, both in the diaspora and particularly in Armenia, runs the risk of draining these ceremonies of any meaning.

The lack of a clear and distinct answer is troubling. Especially now, when genocide survivors are no longer among us, and their personal and immensely powerful testimonies remain with us in sound or picture only, their testimonies are mediated. This reality, this loss, has its consequences. For many of us, Armenians and non-Armenians alike, it turns April 24 into an abstract idea that we no longer have any direct connection with.

In a country like Sweden, the dispassionate government

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celebrates the memory of Raoul Wallenberg but refuses to acknowledge the Armenian Genocide. We witness in France a bizarre court verdict that condemns a French-Armenian for ostensibly defaming a denialist. It allows the Srebrenica Genocide denied on Swedish national television by its executive director, who claims that giving room to denial "enriches the picture of what happened." It romanticizes racism and xenophobia, and makes it extremely difficult to confront these ideas simply with good arguments.

Finally, the absence of the "why" question leads to the relativization of certain concepts. We hear accusations of xenophobia everywhere; even those stopped by the police for speeding speak of "Gestapo methods." We hear Azerbaijani claims that in Khojali, Armenians committed genocide. We hear Turkey preparing commemorations for the Genocide of the Turks in the Balkans. I have even heard some Armenians depict the political and economic situation in Armenia as genocide. Thus, the significance and gravity of the crime of genocide diminishes.

It is time to re-articulate the importance and significance of memory, and question the validity of the old templates that do not have any currency or impact. Why do we remember the genocide? To prevent future recurrences? To honor the victims? To find comfort? We must answer these questions because otherwise we fail to convey the significance of the memory of the suffering, the importance of April 24, or January 27, or Srebrenica Day, or Rwandan Genocide Remembrance Day. We have to give the memory a new force.

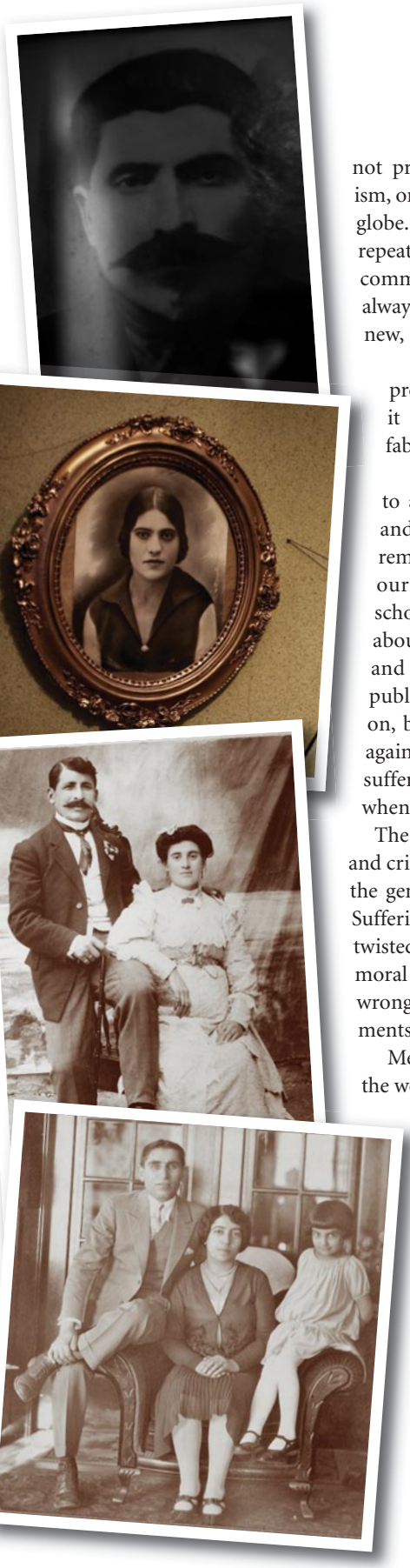
This "starting over" should begin with the questioning of the old answer—We have to remember the past in order to prevent future recurrences. Because this is not true. The memory of the genocide, this tremendous tragedy for the Armenian people, has not helped humanity and could not prevent Srebrenica, Darfur, or Rwanda. Clearly the same memory does not prevent racism, extreme Turkish nationalism, or the atrocities we witness daily around the globe. It could be that memory helps us not to repeat a mistake, but the problem is that the committed mistake is never the same. Evil always appears in a new context, and comes in new, unrecognizable shapes.

Finally, memory helps us when it is processed, but it can also be our enemy when it remains unprocessed, unwoven into the fabric of our society.

So, why remember? We must remember to acknowledge the suffering of our people and their experience with Evil. We must remember because if we do not, we violate our murdered ancestors again. Genocide scholars tell us that we almost always know about genocide when it's unfolding. Countries and their governments—and typically the public, as well—know exactly what is going on, but for some reason fail to take measures against it. To remember is to both recognize the suffering and admit that the world was passive when it should have reacted and acted.

The second reason is to affirm that atrocities and crimes cannot be relativized. The truth about the genocide is one; there are not many truths. Suffering should not be silenced, distorted, or twisted. By rejecting relativization, we create a moral order where right is right and wrong is wrong. This way, we no longer have to hear arguments that "We, too, suffered. Share our pain."

Memory should serve as a building block for the world we are trying to create. It is too fragile to be used as a weapon against evil, and too abstract to serve as a vaccine against evil. We should use memory as the glue that brings together our world, its history, and its institutions. One cannot talk of human rights without remembering the concentration camps of Der Zor. Only then can we say that we have given a meaning to these tragedies. Only then can we truly remember. □



Opposite page, from top: A postcard from the archives of the Danish Women Missionary Workers, c. 1910; bottom: Panper Weekly, April 27, 1933. This page top two: photos by Kathryn Cook; bottom two: photo supplied by Joyce Van Dyke

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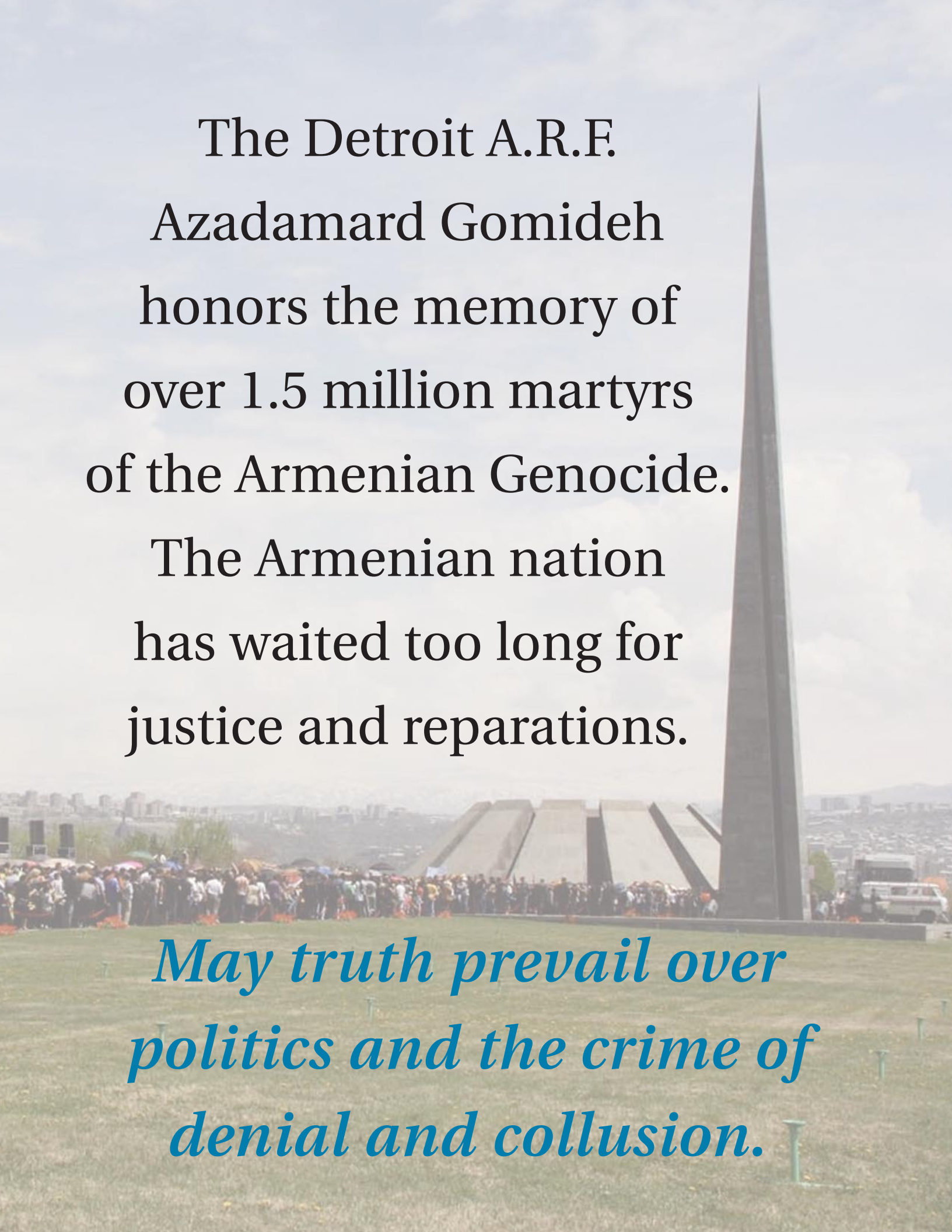


The Detroit A.R.F.
Azadamard Gomideh
honors the memory of
over 1.5 million martyrs
of the Armenian Genocide.
The Armenian nation
has waited too long for
justice and reparations.

May truth prevail over politics and the crime of denial and collusion.

ONE MAN'S THOUGHTS on April 24

By Michael G. Mensoian

THIS YEAR WILL MARK THE 98TH ANNIVERSARY of the genocide of the Armenian nation by the Ottoman-Turkish government. During the waning days of the Great War (World War I), this barbaric plan, which actually began in the fall of 1914, erupted on April 24, 1915 into a brutal and savage drive to empty, by whatever means necessary, the population of the provinces of historic western Armenia. Before it reached its tragic end, some 1.5 million innocent Armenian men, women, and children had been slaughtered, and their wealth confiscated. The victorious allies led by the United Kingdom and France, rather than provide justice to the Armenian people, saw fit to create what is present-day Turkey from the defeated remnants of the Ottoman-Turkish Empire. The Treaty of Lausanne (1923) allowed this new Turkey, stained by the blood of its Armenian victims and profiting from their wealth, to enter the community of nations free of guilt or censure. Forgotten were the survivors of the genocide—traumatized, dispirited, and dispossessed of all resources—who faced uncertain futures wherever chance had taken them.

No single word or combination of words can convey the suffering, the anguish, or the loneliness that engulfed these survivors. Their loss was complete. They were wracked with such overwhelming grief that its essence has been passed from the womb to each of us, regardless of the generation. April 24th is a sacred day that spiritually unites all Armenians, wherever they may be. It is a day to reflect on the lives and the deaths of our martyrs. But of greater importance is the realization, most especially on this day, that within each of us flows the blood of our martyrs, which forever links us to them.

As another April 24th approaches, I am embarrassed by our need to have President Obama use the word "genocide" in what is a pro forma message to the Armenian people. The suffering that our people have endured has been so great, and justice so long denied, that we eagerly embrace political leaders—politicians may be a more appropriate term—who acknowledge the genocide. We have yet to learn that when banal politics comes up against the pragmatism of *real politik*, these same individuals in whom we have placed our trust become more circumspect in their support of genocide. Suddenly genocide is replaced with any number of euphemisms. It is this behavior that insults our grief and our right to justice. President Obama and key members of his administration have and continue to engage in this shameless behavior. Most recently (February 2013) Senator John Kerry—a long-time simpatico—evidently underwent an epiphany during his confirmation hearings for secretary of state, when his long-held acceptance of the Armenian Genocide was transformed to a "massacre" of the Armenian people. Our leaders seem unable or unwilling to make the distinction between the soft, pleasing political rhetoric and the harsher rhetoric of real politik.

As a youth I would attend the April 24th observances. Year after year sympathetic and knowledgeable *odars* would speak of the genocide and the suffering it had wrought on my people. This was followed by well-known Dashnak *ungers* saying the same thing in Armenian, adding that our quest for justice would never cease. When the observance was over, some in the audience were emotionally overcome by personal remembrances, and some by the eloquence of the speakers. However, the overwhelming emotion was one of sadness and, as the years piled one on the other, frustration, because justice was so elusive. April 24th offered very little to those present to be able to view the future with any degree of excitement or commitment. We seemed to be continually dwelling in the past.

We do have an obligation to remember and to grieve the martyrdom of our people. No one would ever deny that. Some two million of our people were uprooted from lands that had been settled by Armenians for millennia. When the carnage had finally ended, 1.5 million of these innocent men, women, and children had been murdered by order of a government. But there were other victims of the genocide, as well. These were the untold numbers of our young women and children who were taken and to be brought up in households that denied them their heritage. And finally, there was the incalculable loss of those future generations of Armenians, which the genocide forever took from our nation.

The past is important. It allows us to understand the present. However, remembrance alone keeps us forever anchored to what was. There must be more than grieving and the hope that justice will be ours. Our nation may have been brought to its knees, but it did not die. There were survivors. And it was these survivors who, wherever chance may have taken them, began the Herculean task of laying the foundations upon which our present diaspora rests. These were the men and women, and yes, the orphaned children who grew into adulthood, destitute, physically exhausted, and emotionally scarred, but so tenacious in holding on to life that they refused to allow adversity to become their master. Their determination, individually and collectively, to rebuild their lives as Armenians provides a lesson that should forever be an inspiration to each of us as we face less difficult tasks in seeking to improve our communities; to provide aid to *mer mayreni yergir* (our motherland); or to help our brothers and sisters in Artsakh, Javakhk, and in war-ravaged Syria. This has to be the subtext of any message offered on this and every April 24th. It is a story worth telling and retelling that should inspire all of us, especially our youth. It should be the salve that assuages the emotional scars that we carry as a people.

Our survivors and the generations to whom they gave life have built a network of vibrant communities in the diaspora that no one, absolutely no one (least of all the perpetrators of the genocide) could have ever envisioned. Today these communities, large and small, clustered or isolated, are spread throughout some 40 countries on every continent. These vigorous, energetic nodes of Armenians support churches, day and Saturday schools, and community and social centers. They maintain active political, cultural, and social organizations that connect their members and incoming generations to their heritage. And they are providing aid through increasing numbers of humanitarian and philanthropic organizations wherever there is a need, in their own communities or beyond. They represent a growing source of political influence, a reservoir of financial and economic resources, and a wellspring from which our culture flows to a greater world audience.

Since 1991, when Armenia declared its independence, a symbiotic relationship has evolved between this expansive network of diasporan communities and our motherland. No longer can Armenia be viewed as the small land-locked country on a map. No longer is it confined to the rugged highlands of its birth. Its land boundaries may not have changed, but its influence as a nation is permanently anchored in communities spread throughout the diaspora. Distance and time are no longer barriers to this evolving concept of an Armenian nation that is unified by a common heritage and a singularity of purpose. Through the wonders of technology we are linked through the ocean of air that allows us to travel across political boundaries in a matter of hours, or to communicate almost instantaneously with our brothers and sisters wherever they may be.

This is but one man's thoughts on this very special day. April 24th represents the past; it represents the unbelievable legacy given to us by our survivors of the genocide; and it represents the promise of a future whose potential is limited only by the dedication and passion we are willing to offer. This should be the message we contemplate on the Day of Remembrance. □

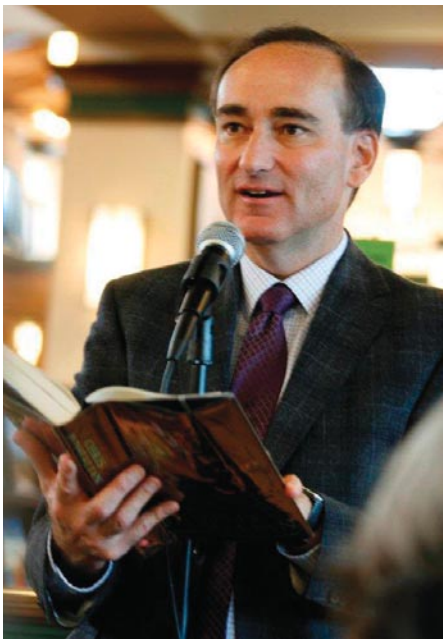
Shining a Light on the Shadow of DENIAL

By Chris Bohjalian

One night in November 2009, I heard Gerda Weissmann Klein speak in Austin, Texas, at the Hillel chapter at the University of Texas. Gerda is not only one of the most charismatic women I've ever met, she is also an immensely gifted writer and speaker. She is also a Holocaust survivor. Her 1957 memoir, *All but My Life*, chronicles her harrowing ordeal in labor camps and death marches during World War II. Cecile Fournier, the concentration camp survivor in my 2008 novel, *Skeletons at the Feast*, owes much to her and to her story. Gerda is, pure and simple, one of the wisest and most inspirational people I know.

During the question and answer period of her speech that night three and a half years ago, someone asked Gerda, "What do you say to Holocaust deniers?"

She shrugged and said, "I really don't have to say much. I simply tell them to ask Germany. Germany doesn't deny it."



Chris Bohjalian (Photo by Tom Vartabedian)

I recalled that exchange often this past year. *The Sandcastle Girls*, my novel of the Armenian Genocide, was published in North America last summer, and the reality is that outside of the diaspora community, most of the United States and Canada knows next to nothing of this part of our story. If you trawl through the thousands of posts on my Facebook page or on Twitter, for example, you will see hundreds of readers of the novel remarking that:

1) They knew nothing of the Armenian Genocide; and

2) They could not understand how they could have grown to adulthood in places such as Indianapolis or Seattle or Jacksonville and not heard a single word about the death of 1.5 million people.

Sometimes these readers told me they were aghast. Sometimes they told me they were ashamed. And very often they asked me why: Why did no one teach them this part of world history? Why did their teachers skip over the 20th century's first genocide?

This page is sponsored by John and Barbara Chookasezian (Calif.)

Bohjalian speaks at Barnes and Noble in Warwick, R.I. on July 27, 2012.

Sometimes these readers told me they were aghast. Sometimes they told me they were ashamed. And very often they asked me why: Why did no one teach them this part of world history? Why did their teachers skip over the 20th century's first genocide?

And the answer, pure and simple, is denial.

Imagine if I had answered my readers who wanted to learn more about the Armenian Genocide by saying, "Ask Turkey. They'll tell you all about it. They don't deny it." But, of course, Turkey does deny it—as, alas, do many of Turkey's allies. Now, these readers were not disputing the veracity of the Armenian Genocide. They were not questioning the history in my novel. My point is simply this: There is a direct connection between the reality that so few Americans know of the Armenian Genocide and the Turkish government's nearly century-long effort to sweep into the shadows the crimes of its World War I leaders.

As anyone who reads this paper knows, the Turkish government's tactics have varied, ranging from denial to discreditation. They have, over the years, blamed others, and they have blamed the Armenians themselves. They have lied. They have bullied any historian or diplomat or citizen or journalist or filmmaker who's dared to try and set the record straight.

Now, in all fairness, there might be a small reasonableness trickling slowly into Turkish policy on this issue. Earlier this year, on the anniversary of Hrant Dink's assassination, the editor of this paper gave a speech in Turkey—in Turkish—about justice for the genocide. You can now read Agos, the Armenian newspaper in Istanbul, while flying on Turkish Airlines.

Nevertheless, it is a far cry from these baby steps and Istanbul following Berlin's lead anytime soon. Berlin, after all, built a poignant and powerful Holocaust monument near the Brandenburg Gate. Can you see Ankara dedicating a Memorial to the Murdered Armenians of the Ottoman Empire?

And the reality remains here in the United States that we as Armenians actually have to struggle to get our story into the curriculums of far too many school districts. We often have to create the curriculums ourselves.

How appalling is this issue? My own daughter went to a rigorous high school just outside of Boston, no more than 10 or 15 minutes from the Armenian community in Watertown and the Armenian Library and Museum of America. I saw the school had an elective course on the history of the Ottoman Empire. When I ran into a student who had taken the semester long class, I asked, "How much time was devoted to the Armenian Genocide?" He looked at me, perplexed. He had no idea what I was talking about. "I guess we never got to it because the course only went as far as the end of the First World War."

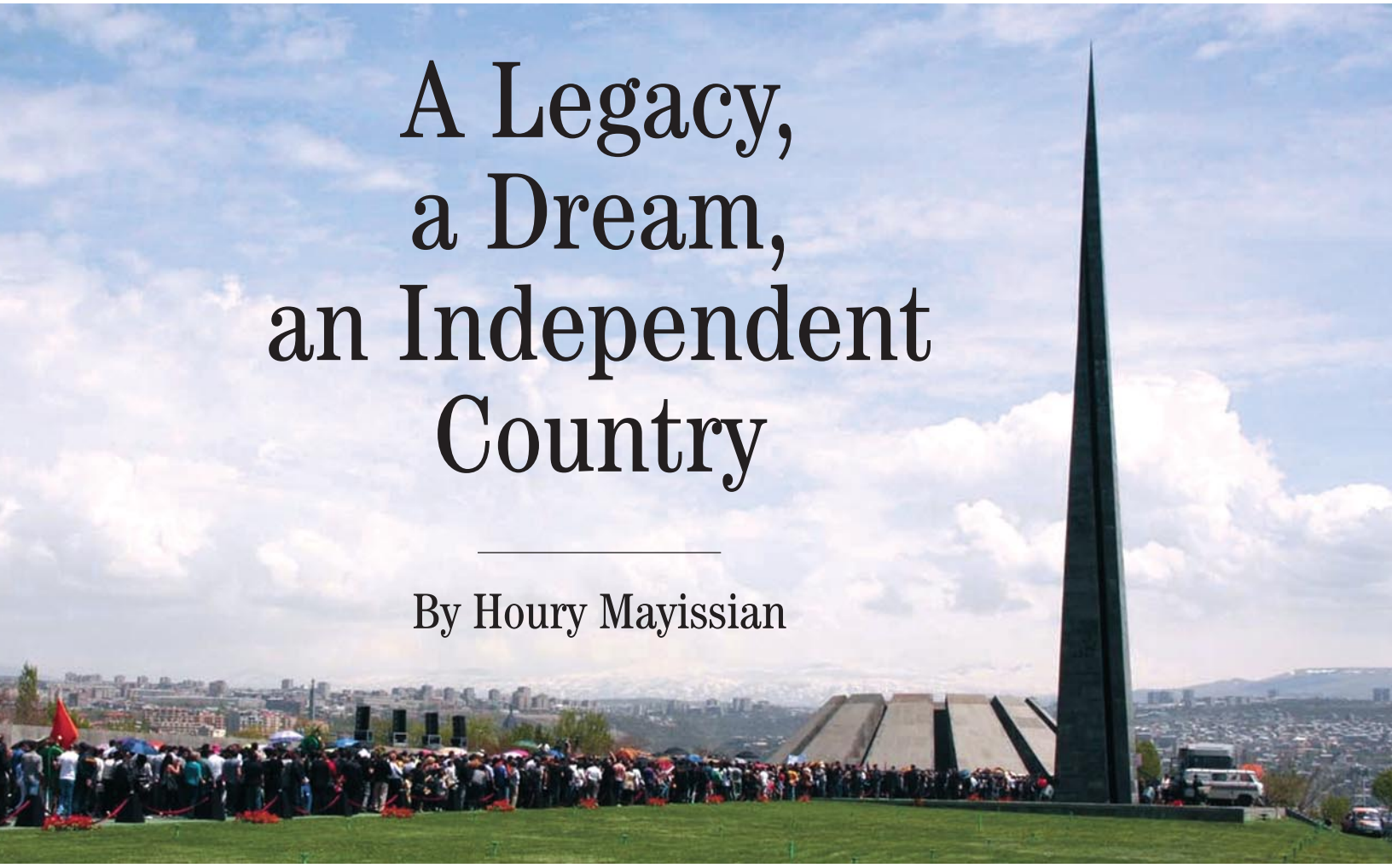
Oh.

Consequently, this past year I wound up as far more of an activist than I ever expected I'd be about . . . anything. The reality is that activist artists—or at least activist novelists—sometimes seem more likely to embarrass themselves than affect social change. (Exhibit A? Norman Mailer's campaign for mayor of New York.) But with every one of those posts on my Facebook wall, as one reader after another asked me how it was possible that they had never heard of the Armenian Genocide, I found myself growing unexpectedly, uncharacteristically angry. Make no mistake, I wasn't angry with Turkish citizens or Turkish-Americans. But I was furious with a government policy that has allowed a nation to, in essence, get away with murder—to build a modern, western state and a civilized reputation on the bones of my ancestors. And I found myself energized at every appearance in ways I never had been before, whether I was speaking at a little library in central Vermont with exactly zero Armenian-Americans in attendance or on Capitol Hill, under the auspices of the Armenian National Committee of America.

So, will more Americans know our story two years from now, when the centennial of the start of the slaughter arrives? Darned right they will. We will see to it. □

Chris Bohjalian's novel of the Armenian Genocide, The Sandcastle Girls, *was published in paperback earlier this month by Vintage Books.*

This page is sponsored by Annie Demirjian



A Legacy, a Dream, an Independent Country

By Houry Mayissian

It is April again. It's been 98 years since that fateful month in 1915. As I reflect on the legacy of the Armenian Genocide, I think how survival and seeking justice have always been part of that legacy.

From the pressing need to rebuild their shattered lives to efforts to organize communities, for the generation of survivors themselves it was, first and foremost, a legacy of surviving as a nation against all odds.

Starting in the 1960's, particularly with the 50th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide in 1965, a strong emphasis emerged on seeking international recognition. The 1965 Uruguay resolution, the 1973 United Nations report referring to the Armenian Genocide as "the first Genocide of the 20th century," and the many nation-state recognitions that followed, signaled the emergence of an empowered, resourceful generation of descendants, intent on internationalizing the issue and maintaining pressure on Turkey.

In more recent times, a focus has been placed on reparations, starting with the lawsuits against insurance companies that financially benefited from clients who perished during the Armenian Genocide. The "Return of Churches" Resolution introduced in the U.S. House of Representatives in 2011 was another step forward in this direction.

From survival and self-organization to the struggle for recognition and reparations, the journey toward justice has been long.

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PHOTO BY NANORE BARSOUMIAN

Moving forward, having a strong, sustainable Armenia must be a part of the equation *alongside* the ongoing struggle for genocide recognition and reparations.

Central to our objective of seeking justice has been the unrelenting dream of an independent Armenian homeland.

Today that dream is a reality, albeit a fragile one that faces serious challenges: blockaded borders and hostile neighbors externally; widespread corruption, the lack of rule of law, poverty, and emigration internally.

Today's Armenia is not the Western Armenia of 1915. It is not land "returned" to us by Turkey as compensation for the Armenian Genocide. However, today's Armenia is itself a legacy of the genocide. Miraculously established as an independent country after hard-fought battles in 1918, it represented the will of a massacred nation to survive. As a re-emerged independent republic in 1991, this tiny parcel of land is the guarantor of the security and sustainability of a nation spread the world over.

My roots as a diasporan cannot be traced to Yerevan or Lori or Gyumri, but for me today's Armenia is very much a homeland. It is very much a part of our "Free, Independent, and United Armenia" dream, which itself is the essence of a just resolution of the Armenian Genocide.

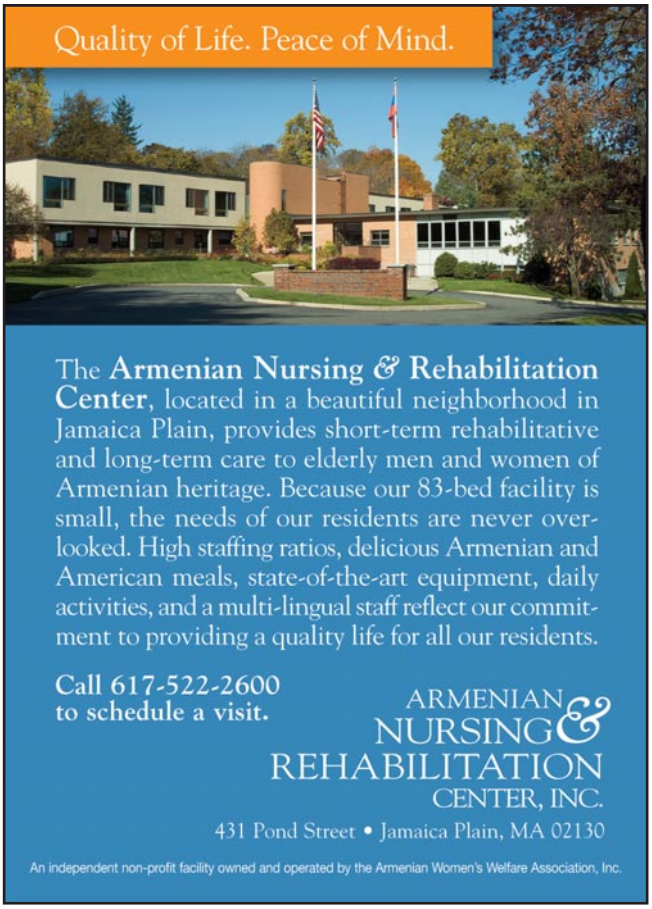
As we approach the 100th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide, there will be much discussion about what we have achieved in our struggle for a just resolution and where we go from here. Moving forward, having a strong, sustainable Armenia must be a part of the equation *alongside* the ongoing struggle for genocide recognition and reparations.

As post-election events continue to unfold in Armenia and echo in the diaspora, we already seem to be on the brink of a qualitatively new phase in Armenia-Diaspora relations. One where relations are not limited to only providing financial support, or to formal activities such as government-organized Armenia-Diaspora conferences.

Today, Armenians in the diaspora seem more willing and ready than ever to engage with Armenia in a new light, and the momentum must build further. This requires diasporan institutions and organizations, from political parties to schools, to be active proponents for better informed, and therefore more purposefully engaged, communities.

From funding reform-oriented organizations in Armenia, to volunteering their time to them, there is a lot that individual diasporans can do to bring positive change to Armenia. At the same time, by being more critical of the Armenian authorities and maintaining pressure on them, leading diaspora organizations can go a long way to trigger change.

Ninety-eight years after the Armenian Genocide and we are still fighting to secure an acknowledgement, an apology, and reparations. These are essential components of a just resolution of the Armenian Genocide and we must continue to pursue these objectives. At the same time, however, we are fortunate enough to have a homeland. That homeland itself is a part of the solution. As Diaspora Armenians, we must recognize this and ensure that our political agendas are widened in scope to pursue a Just, Democratic, and Sustainable, as well as a Free, Independent, and United Armenia. □



The One and the Many

The Ontology of Genocide Against Minorities in the Ottoman Empire

By Henry C. Theriault

The metaphysics of the relationship between the unit and the multitude have long been contested in scientific, political, historiographic, and other contexts. Even the terms we use to refer to different tensions often unavoidably commit us to favor one or the other term: the atom and the molecule, the part and the whole, the one and the many, the individual and the masses, the subject and the state, and so on.

Still, there is often some kind of material support for one side or the other: It is the atom that is the fundamental unit of matter, not the molecule or compound (nor the proton, quark, or any other subatomic particle). In the social realm, however, even such objective physical features, though they might exist, do not hold sway. True, human beings are physically discrete relative to one another. Yet, the individual human being appears dependent on other human beings not only for basic survival, but for emotional and intellectual development. If linguistic rationalists such as Noam Chomsky are correct, then our minds are fundamentally social, in that (the fundamental social mechanism of) language is embedded naturally in them and is the form of thought itself. The more we consider such issues, the more ambiguous such a relationship appears. Think also of the deep political conflicts, not to mention the oppressions and perverted extremisms, generated by adherents to one side or the other on whether the citizen or nation/state, individual member or race, etc., is primary.

This conceptual tension becomes even more fundamental when we engage historical issues, and interpretation overwhelms materiality. The data of history are indeterminate, and any set allows a range of cohesive accounts to be proposed. At the same time, material factors, such as statements by genocide perpetrators of the intent to destroy, or consistent patterns of exterminatory actions that cannot be coincidental, or even consistencies in structural situations, such as different groups in the Ottoman Empire occupying similar positions within the *millet* system and experiencing similar fates during the Ottoman genocidal process against minorities. ["at the same time, material factors, such as …" what?] What is more, the parsing of a unitary event in space and time is, ultimately, arbitrary, in the sense of allowing more than one parsing, not any parsing. Did the Armenian Genocide comprise the events of the 1890's, 1909, 1914, and

PHOTO BY KATHRYN COOK

1915? Did it end in 1918, 1923, or much later? Was the French Revolution a series of specific events or one overarching event? Both at once? Local- and meso-level variations fragment the event to the point at which what appears to be an internally complex single event can just as easily be regarded as a series of distinct events and moments that are not linearly causally connected (in a causal chain), but which at any point were the function of a variety of forces such that the next situation was not entirely determined by the previous one in the sequence of events retroactively understood as the French Revolution. But the push is just as much in the other direction. Did the killing of returning Armenians after the fall of the Young Turk regime constitute the beginning of a new set of violent acts, or was it a continuity of the genocide? As we reflect, it seems that the previous violence and entrenchment of the ideology behind it made possible and largely determined the later killings, suggesting that the bulk of the genocide is inseparable from the later killing of Armenians.

A truly comprehensive understanding of the genocide of Armenians depends on attention to the broader genocidal process in the Ottoman Empire.

Or does interpretative framework always trump material possibilities if we decide it does? Is all "unity" the function of consciousness, and so whatever we want it to be (as proposed by postmodernist relativists) or whatever our prejudices and conceptual limitations determine it to be (as maintained by superscholars placing themselves beyond such limitations due to their ability to transcend "nationalism" or some other putatively limited perspective)?

There are many ways we might try to dig ourselves out of this mire of ambiguity, not just regarding what the right interpretation of events is but what the right framework for interpretation is. We could say that both drives, one toward unification and the other toward fragmentation, are primary and related, with the focus on elements making possible appreciation of composites or superindividual wholes, and the focus on the overarching unity of historical processes giving context and meaning to discrete events. Choosing one or the other perspective as correct means losing the essential contributions of the other or the one as part of a comprehensive approach to historical events that allows us to see them in both their detailed specificities *and* their overarching patterns and causal trajectories. We can go even further than this simple binary, as explained by such genocide scholars as Scott Strauss and Ugur Ungor, to recognize multiple levels of genocidal activity, typically referred to as the familiar macro (overarching), micro (local, individual), and meso (regional) levels. All levels affect the other levels and all are essential to comprehensive understanding of a case of genocide. This approach allows us to recognize that each level of analysis has a function and a value. What is more, dialectically (or trialectically), the more we attempt to approach a case exclusively at one of the levels, the more our findings and interpretative needs push us to consider and even depend on the other levels—indeed, the more we must take account of the other levels even to produce any findings at one of the levels. The more we push one perspective, the more essential the other perspective(s) become.

If we hold that concept has primacy over empirical fact in some kind of Kantian sense, then concept itself is conditioned and necessary. We have to see unities and multiplicities in history not because they exist in the events we regard, but because that is how our minds organize the world for us. The problem, of course, is that rational people can disagree about precisely how to organize their perceptions of reality, so we need a deeper principle to decide which parsing of historical events is correct. The view that the simplest explanation that fits all data is best is often proposed for scientific theorization. But it, too, is incomplete. How do we define "simple"? What is a "best fit"? And, which data do we exclude, because any theory that goes beyond a mere restatement of the data never fits the data perfectly and thus requires discounting some data.

Quine's solution is the "web of belief." According to this model, no single belief about the world exists independently of other beliefs; rather all beliefs an individual holds are related to one another in a complex network. If one belief is falsified, this affects other dependent or related beliefs as well. The most reasonable interpretation of new historical data is the one most consistent with the set of beliefs about the world a person already holds, that is, the one that disrupts that person's web of beliefs the least. The obvious problem is that socially inculcated ideologies and manipulative propaganda work precisely by warping a person's web of beliefs away from what others not subject to this propaganda would find most reasonable. It is precisely the web of preexisting beliefs about the world—that "our" society is inherently good and could not commit horrific acts of genocide, that extreme views tend to be biased so the truth in a case of conflicting views lies somewhere in the middle, etc.—that deniers exploit.

Does this mean we are stuck with a postmodernist relativism? Here ethical commitments as well as practical concerns can have a decisive role. That the evaluative principles we employ might be ultimately arbitrary does not mean that those committed to human rights cannot choose to agree to the basic Utilitarian principle that "suffering is bad" and its implication that "the intentional or neglectful infliction of human suffering is bad." If the latter is true, then we can choose to organize historical data in such a way as to maximize our recognition of suffering. Thus, the best interpretation of a set of historical data is the one that least downplays or hides dimensions of suffering. Similarly, an obvious practical concern is capturing as much detail within a "unity" as possible. In neo-Hegelian terms, it is

precisely unification that preserves internal complexity that is optimal, so that the drives toward unification and fragmentation themselves are misleading, as true unification is a unification of complexity such that if that complexity is superseded or obscured the unification becomes less interesting or trivial. Reduction by suppression of complexity is not unification but misleading simplification. The question is no longer which drive we emphasize, but how to follow each in a manner that maintains as much as possible appreciation of the other feature of reality. We want to look at details in all their complexity in such a way that we do not thereby lose sight of overarching connections.

But how do these ontological abstractions relate to the Ottoman-Turkish treatment of minorities? In recent years, there has emerged a new way of looking at what had long been studied as "the Armenian Genocide." Broadening attention to the fates of Assyrians and Greeks under the Young Turk and Kemalist regimes has led to a recasting of "the Armenian Genocide" as the Ottoman-Turkish Genocide of (Christian) Minorities. Although earlier work had increased this attention, David Gaunt's work[1] is arguably the first to present more than one victim group as the targets of an integrated genocidal process. Through this framework we can appreciate the conceptual interfusion of the three groups (because of the territorial focus of Gaunt's work, Greeks are not a focal element, but an extension of his approach can easily be made to include them) in a single genocidal process, even as historical sources are typically precise in the local fates of the groups[2] and thus help preserve a precise understanding of the complexity of the overarching process. In the same period, some Armenian studies scholars began a similar push. For instance, in the 2005 conference on the Armenian Genocide he hosted at UCLA, as well as the subsequent book of papers delivered at the conference, Professor Richard Hovannisian included papers on both Assyrian and Greek victimization.[3] The shift quickly fostered explicit analysis of a unified genocidal process, in the work, for instance, of Hannibal Travis[4] and Panayiotis Diamadis.[5] What is more, this attention on the unified process has also been coupled with groundbreaking work on the heretofore neglected Assyrian and Greek aspects, most notably in recent anthologies.[6]

As comparative genocide studies showed that consideration of diverse cases of genocide was not simply a matter of logging analogical comparisons and contrasts, but of recognizing historical relationships and common contextual factors across often apparently disparate instances of genocide, the new works on the Ottoman-Turkish genocidal process are not simply developing parallel histories of three target groups. On the contrary, the more analysis of the particular groups that is done, the more the inevitability of consideration of the treatment of the other groups becomes apparent.

These works show that it is not simply a matter of adding two cases to a set of Ottoman-Turkish genocides, but taking an integrative approach. As already suggested, that approach arises organically through the sustained treatment of any of the particular victim groups. As I have explained to students regarding Gaunt's *Massacres, Resistance, Protectors*, and George Shirinian has commented about editing *The Asia Minor Catastrophe*, study of the fate of Ottoman Assyrians and Greeks, respectively, has taught us a great deal about the fate of Armenians. In fact, I contend here that it is no longer possible to study the latter in isolation. As the opening ontological considerations imply, a truly comprehensive understanding of the genocide of Armenians depends on attention to the broader genocidal process in the Ottoman Empire.

This is not, of course, to suggest that there are no differences between these fates. Because of territorial distributions and sizes of the different groups, nuances in perpetrator ideology, opportunities (the defense of Van, for instance), considerations regarding statehood (the Greeks were understood to have a state already, though one seen as a threat to Turkish territory, the Armenians were perceived as a large enough group to make a claim on their historical homeland areas, while the Assyrians were not perceived as a large or concentrated enough group to pose an immediate territorial threat), and other factors, the timing, methods, extent, and even stated rationales varied among the groups. Yet, the same is true of differences within each of these groups, albeit to a lesser extent. For example, while Armenian Protestants were targeted for genocide, the trajectory of decision-making and implementation was different from that of Apostolic Armenians. Similarly, gender was a very significant factor in the specific ways members of each group were treated, though, for instance, Greek labor battalions included both men and women (yet the women were subjected to sexual violence).[7] But it is precisely the appreciation of these variations that allows a precise and unified analysis of the complex genocidal process that occurred in the Ottoman Empire, spanning war and peace, three governments, and a wide range of locations. □

ENDNOTES

1. David Gaunt, *Massacres, Resistance, Protectors: Muslim-Christian Relations in Eastern Anatolia during World War I* (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2006).
2. Comments by Roupen Adalian in reference to the documents on the Ottoman genocidal process contained in the U.S. National Archives, "The Study of the Armenian Genocide Sources: Where and What to Look for?", "Armenian Genocide: Challenges on the Eve of the Centenary" International Conference, Yerevan, Armenia, March 22–23, 2013, on March 22.
3. See Anahit Khosroeva, "The Assyrian Genocide in the Ottoman Empire and Adjacent Territories," pp. , and Speros Vryonis, Jr., "Greek Labor Battalions Asia Minor," pp. 275–90, in *The Armenian Genocide: Cultural and Ethical Legacies*, ed. Richard G. Hovannisian (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2007).
4. Hannibal Travis, *Genocide in the Middle East: The Ottoman Empire, Iraq, and Sudan* (Durham: Carolina Academic Press, 2010).
5. Panayiotis Diamadis, "Children and Genocide," in *Genocide Perspectives IV: Essays on Holocaust and Genocide*, ed. Colin Tatz (Sydney: The Australian Institute for Holocaust and Genocide Studies/ UTSePress, 2012), pp. 312–52.
6. Tessa Hofmann, Matthias Bjornlund, and Vasileios Meichanetsidis, eds., *The Genocide of the Ottoman Greeks: Studies on the State-Sponsored Campaign of Extermination of the Christians of Asia Minor (1912-1922) and Its Aftermath: History, Law, Memory* (Aristide D. Caratzas, 2012), and George Shirinian, ed., *The Asia Minor Catastrophe and the Ottoman Greek Genocide* (Toronto: Zoryan Institute, 2012).
7. See Vryonis.

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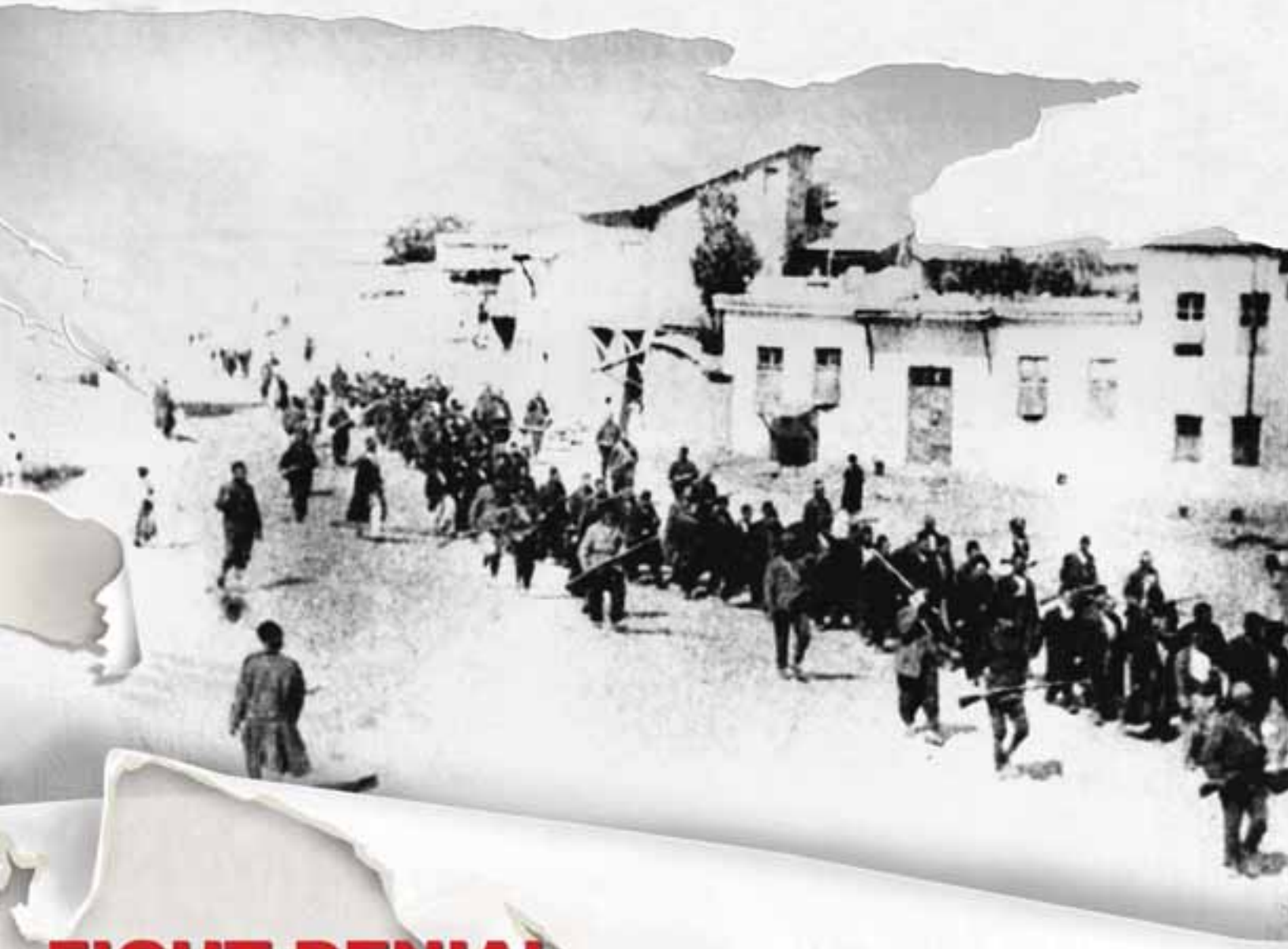

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Scholarship, Manufacturing DOUBT and Genocide Denial[1]

By Marc Mamigonian

> *"Doubt is our product since it is the best means of competing with the 'body of fact' that exists in the mind of the general public. It is also the means of establishing a controversy…"*
>
> —Brown & Williamson tobacco company memorandum (1969)[2]

Denial of the Armenian Genocide began concurrently with the execution of the Armenian Genocide. As the Ottoman-Armenian population was massacred and deported, the Ottoman leadership constructed a narrative that, with periodic revisions and refinements, remains in place today: Armenians were disloyal and rebellious, a threat to security and the war effort; it was therefore necessary to temporarily relocate them; and measures would be taken to protect them and safeguard their property and assets.

Each element of this narrative, and each measure taken to give it substance, was a fabrication. What was important, however, was that each part of it could be made to appear true. The fabrications came to be accepted as truth in Turkey as Mustafa Kemal, the founder of the new Turkish Republic, institutionalized the official narrative about the Armenians that had already been drafted by the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) leadership that planned and implemented the genocide.[3]

This was all well and good for Turkey, but it was one thing to manufacture a fake history for the consumption of its own people, and quite another to export it to foreign markets such as the United States, where the genocide had been heavily reported in the press and public sentiment aroused to assist survivors.[4]

Today, nearly 100 years on, there is a large and constantly growing body of research and documentation of the Armenian Genocide that increasingly draws on previously inaccessible Ottoman-Turkish archival sources. Even in Turkey, a growing number of people question the government-mandated version of events. An observer could be forgiven for supposing that denial of the Armenian Genocide must be nearly non-existent at this point.

And yet denial of the Armenian Genocide is seeping into academia and mainstream discourse. In an earlier article,[5] I explored "how genocide denial has evolved a more effective model that seeks to establish itself as the legitimate 'other side of the story.'" I would like here to delve further back and look at the potential roots of some of the modern strategies used by the Turkish

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state and those who aid its efforts to "manufacture doubt" about the Armenian Genocide. This calls for an examination of the cigarette industry's 50-plus-year effort to create a permanent smokescreen of controversy around the "alleged" link between smoking and cancer, as Big Tobacco provided a paradigm for other large-scale efforts to deny unpleasant truths—including modern denial of the Armenian Genocide.

★ ★ ★

How it came to pass that Armenian Americans began to raise the issue of recognition of and justice for the Armenian Genocide, particularly after 1965 and with increased intensity in the 1970's, is a complex story.[6] In brief, a generation of scholars and activists began an effort to educate the wider American public about the crime that had been committed decades before, and to work for recognition and ultimately justice.

By the late 1970's and early 1980's, Turkey was on the defensive in this public relations war in the U.S.[7] Even though Turkey had, for decades, relied on state-to-state contact with the U.S. and called upon the U.S. Department of State to represent its interests[8] in the name of preserving good relations with an important trading partner and post-World War II military ally, this was no longer sufficient in the public realm. For Turkey, the solution was to try to *win* the public relations war.[9] This required expanding its range of responses to the problem.

The renewed vigor and relative success of Armenian-American activism after 1965 must have taken Turkey by surprise. In this period, it was not until 1975 that Federal Foreign Agents Registration Act reports show Turkey engaging public relations firms for purposes other than travel and tourism promotion.[10] In 1975, Turkey began working with Manning, Selvage, & Lee, Inc., "a public relations firm [that] disseminates material on behalf of the Government of Turkey for the purpose of influencing 'the attitude of the public and the Congress toward Turkey.'" In the following years, other firms would be added: Edelman International Inc., Doremus, and most importantly, Gray & Co.,[11] and Hill & Knowlton.

★ ★ ★

In establishing a relationship with Hill & Knowlton, Turkey attached itself to one of the largest and most influential public relations firms in the world, with considerable experience in the kind of narrative re-framing that Turkey needed. It was Hill & Knowlton that in the 1950's had devised a PR strategy for Big Tobacco when it was confronted with mounting scientific evidence of the direct tie between smoking and lung cancer.[12] Articles had appeared in scientific journals and widely read popular pieces were spreading the news to a broader readership. The industry faced a public relations nightmare and falling stock prices.[13]

On Dec. 15, 1953, the heads of the major tobacco companies held an unprecedented summit to address these developments which threatened their lucrative businesses. In attendance was John Hill of Hill & Knowlton, who formulated a plan that would allow the industry to stall for decades and to shape the discussion around a manufactured "controversy" rather than the emerging scientific consensus. In the words of author and cancer researcher Devra Davis, this plan:

> **can be summed up very simply: create doubt. Be prepared to buy the best expertise available to insist that more research is needed before conclusions can be reached. [The tobacco industry] would marshal its own experts to magnify the appearance of a scientific debate long after the science was in fact unequivocal. John Hill's brilliant innovation remains a staple for those who would fight the conclusions of science even today.[14]**

One of Hill's immediate recommendations was "a public statement by cigarette makers" that would "clarify the problem and reassure the public that: (a) the industry's first and foremost interest is the public health; (b) there is no proof of the claims which link smoking and lung cancer; and (c) the industry is inaugurating a joint plan to deal with the situation."[15]

Less than a month after the meeting, an ad appeared in the New York Times and more than 400 other newspapers over the names of the presidents of most of the major cigarette manufacturers and tobacco growers entitled, without apparent irony, "A Frank Statement to Cigarette Smokers." Admitting that recent reports "have given wide publicity to a theory that cigarette smoking is in some way linked with lung cancer in human beings," the statement cautioned that the recent findings "are not regarded as conclusive in the field of cancer research" and "eminent doctors and research scientists have publicly questioned the claimed significance of these experiments." Finally, they announced the creation of the Tobacco Industry Research Committee (TIRC),[16] headed by "a scientist of unimpeachable integrity and national repute" and guided by "an Advisory Board of scientists disinterested in the cigarette industry."[17]

Historian of science Robert N. Proctor notes that the TIRC, later renamed the Council for Tobacco Research, for decades "was the world's leading sponsor of (what appeared to be) tobacco and health research."[18] However, "[t]he goal was really to look in such a way as not to find, and then to claim that despite the many millions spent on 'smoking and health' no proof of harms had ever been uncovered."[19]

Through a combination of its influence as a major American industry and the credibility by association generated by funding research at institutions of higher learning, "the industry was able to clog congressional hearings, to distort popular understanding, and to delay or weaken legislation designed to regulate smoking. . . . Tobacco charlatans gained a voice before the U.S. Congress and were often able even to insinuate themselves into peer-reviewed literature."[20]

A 1972 memo by Fred Panzer, vice president of public relations of the industry-run

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DOUBT

Tobacco Institute, offered qualified praise for the nearly 20-year-long strategy of "creating doubt about the health charge without actually denying it," but cautioned that this commitment "to an ill-defined middle ground which is articulated by variations on the theme that, 'the case is not proved'" has "always been a holding strategy."[21]

"Manufacturing doubt" may have been only a "holding strategy," but it worked for over half a century. In the end it could not prevent the onslaught of costly legal actions, resulting, most notably, in the 1998 Tobacco Master Settlement Agreement[22] and a 2006 court ruling that "found 11 of America's major Tobacco Companies and related entities guilty of nearly 150 counts of mail and wire fraud in a continuing 'pattern of racketeering activity' with the 'specific intent to defraud' under the Racketeer Influence Corrupt Organizations (RICO) Act."[23] As part of the 1998 settlement, the Tobacco Institute and the Council for Tobacco Research were shut down.

Just as the tobacco companies viewed children as potential future customers, Turkey understood the value of exposing students to their version of history. Such an effort would be facilitated by having work at hand by credentialed Western scholars presenting a version of history sympathetic to Turkey's official narrative.

★ ★ ★

The Turkish state did not learn denial from the American tobacco industry or American public relations firms. But by the early 1980's, it had reached a moment of crisis analogous to that of the tobacco industry ca. 1953–54, and new conditions required new methods of obfuscating the truth. Some of these new methods were old hat for Turkey's PR advisors.

Speros Vryonis has written of the impact of the appointment of Şükrü Elekdağ as Turkish ambassador to the United States in 1980, of the "profuse" and "organized" public relations and propaganda output during his tenure, and in particular of his inauguration of "a new policy in the vast world of American academe."[24] The public relations push was multi-faceted.[25] An immediate need was to become more effective in countering Armenian-American efforts to secure U.S. recognition of the genocide, and here the expertise and connections of Turkey's

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DOUBT

As Proctor writes of Big Tobacco, for decades it "urged the need for 'more research,' with the claim sometimes even made that it was dangerous to jump to conclusions, given that the case was not yet closed. And that, of course, is how the industry wanted the health 'question' kept: forever open."

new PR and lobbying partners would prove invaluable in defeating Congressional resolutions, most dramatically in 1990, as well as preventing any recurrence of a sitting president publicly uttering the words, "Armenian Genocide."[26]

Another component was to present a more appealing image of Turkey in order to counter the reality of the genocide, ongoing abuses of human rights, the invasion of Cyprus in 1974, the brutality of the 1980 military coup, and the violent repression of the Kurds. A major effort on this front was the 1987 "Age of Süleyman the Magnificent" exhibition at the National Gallery of Art, the Art Institute of Chicago, and Metropolitan Museum of Art—an exhibition underwritten by American tobacco giant Philip Morris at a cost of close to $1 million.[27]

Of particular interest to Turkey was "to rectify substantial factual errors about contemporary Turkey and Turkish history contained in secondary school social science textbooks…[and] standard reference encyclopedias."[28] Just as the tobacco companies viewed children as potential future customers, Turkey understood the value of exposing students to their version of history. Such an effort would be facilitated by having work at hand by credentialed Western scholars presenting a version of history sympathetic to Turkey's official narrative.

Thus a key element of Turkey's long-range plan was to expand upon the small group of American scholars producing work that emphasized in a positive sense Turkey's role in the world. By funding and encouraging further scholarship, it would be possible to cultivate academics who could produce a credible-looking body of Turkey-friendly and, in some cases, genocide-denying scholarship.

It may be that with its increased influence in the world, the Turkish state wanted more than simply to get its way by asserting its will: It wanted its narrative to be *believed and legitimized*. Bobelian writes that "[a]fter the 1990 confrontation in the Senate, the tide turned against Turkey's distortions of history.... As time went on, fewer and fewer elected officials maintained their faith in Turkey's position,"[29] even if they continued to vote for it. In 2000, Şükrü Elekdağ observed that a Congressional genocide resolution failed "mainly because the winds of war began to blow in the Middle East."[30] In 2007, after the House Foreign Relations Committee voted on another resolution, the late Turkish commentator, diplomat, and Member of Parliament Gunduz Aktan understood that even those "supporting the Turkish case... said loud and clear that the events of 1915 amounted to genocide," and only "because of the strategic importance of Turkey, because of the national interest of the U.S., they are voting no." For Aktan, this realization was "unbearable."[31] Once, it might have been sufficient simply to prevail, but no longer. Genocide denial needed to be made respectable, pedigreed, and not simply something one voted for while holding one's nose.

Taking a page from Big Tobacco's playbook, Turkey created its own version of the Council for Tobacco Research—the Institute of Turkish Studies, directed by Ottoman scholar Heath Lowry—to boost Turkey's scholarly bona fides. Established in 1982 through an initial grant of $3 million from the Turkish government, ITS generated prestige by association, disbursing funds to scholars associated with many illustrious American colleges and universities.

Vryonis, as well as, most vividly, Roger W. Smith, Eric Markusen, and Robert J. Lifton[32] have shown that ITS also served the interests of the Turkish Embassy (the Turkish ambassador serves as "honorary chairman" of its board of governors); and, as the late Donald Quataert would learn, breaking with Turkey's official line carried with it serious consequences, as he was forced out as its chairman after acknowledging the Armenian Genocide.[33]

Like the Tobacco Industry Research Committee/Council for Tobacco Research, ITS has funded many entirely legitimate scholars and projects. But just as the TIRC "didn't pay a lot of attention to tobacco and tended not to fund research that might cast cigarettes in a bad light,"[34] so, too, ITS-supported scholarship has not paid much attention to the Armenians, much less the Armenian Genocide.[35] Surely, this is what Quataert had in mind when he wrote (in the review that sealed his fate at ITS) that a "heavy aura of self-censorship" prevails among Ottoman scholars, who "fall into a camp of either silence or denial—both of which are forms of complicity."[36]

By the year 2000, Şükrü Elekdağ would complain that ITS had "lost its function and its effectiveness," from which one infers that he conceived of its function being something more than funding scholarly research. Instead, he urged the creation of a "project to make it quite clear that [Turkey] is not at all afraid to confront the realities of its past, a project aimed at shedding light on the historical facts in the course of academic research."[37]

Turkey's version of Big Tobacco's "Frank Statement" took the form of the notorious 1985 advertisement in the New York Times and Washington Post urging the U.S. Congress not to pass a resolution recognizing the genocide as such—with the names

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of 69 scholars who questioned the appropriateness of using the word "genocide" to refer to "Armenian suffering" during World War I.

The ad, taken out by the Assembly of Turkish American Associations (ATAA) but co-authored by Heath Lowry,[38] argued that "the weight of evidence so far uncovered points in the direction of inter-communal warfare.... But much more remains to be discovered before historians will be able to sort out precisely responsibility between warring and innocent, and to identify the causes for the events..."[39]

As Proctor writes of Big Tobacco, for decades it "urged the need for 'more research,' with the claim sometimes even made that it was dangerous to jump to conclusions, given that the case was not yet closed. And that, of course, is how the industry wanted the health 'question' kept: forever open."[40]

Turkey deployed the "69 scholars statement" in much the same manner as the tobacco companies used the "Frank Statement" and similar documents: "to clog congressional hearings, to distort popular understanding, and to delay or weaken legislation." But it, too, eventually exhausted its usefulness; and Elekdağ would complain that "[u]nfortunately this document cannot be used effectively now. Many of the people who signed it are now hesitant or afraid to come out and declare their continuing support for it. ... With the exception of Justin McCarthy none of them is prepared to sign a similar communique today."[41]

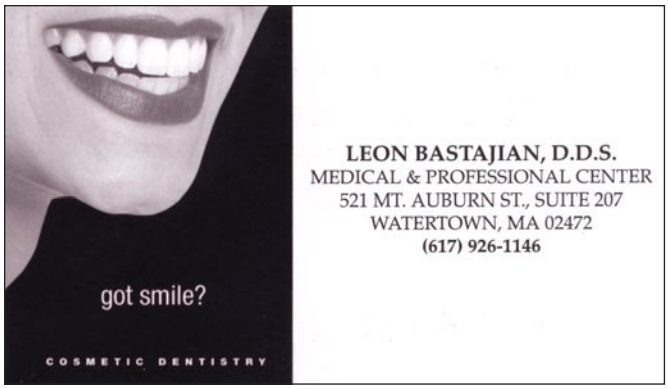
Since 2000, when Elekdağ voiced his discontent with what might be called the "holding strategy" employed up to that time, the Turkish state and those who support it have ratcheted up their efforts.[42] When the creation of the "Turkish Studies Project" (funded not by the Turkish government but by the Turkish Coalition of America) at the University of Utah was announced,[43] it was hardly surprising that Şükrü Elekdağ was on its advisory board, since the effort could be seen as the fulfillment of his vision.

In future articles, I will take a closer look at the rhetoric and techniques of this ongoing and evolving academic campaign to roll out a "counter-genocide narrative" for the purpose of creating a permanent haze of doubt around the Armenian Genocide, and normalizing and legitimizing the Turkish state's narrative of genocide denial.

Doubt is Turkey's product, too, and the factory is humming. □

ENDNOTES

1. The author wishes to thank Armenian Weekly Editor Khatchig Mouradian, Michael Bobelian, Ayda Erbal, Richard Hovannisian, and Roger Smith for their helpful comments, and Lou Ann Matossian for her important research and contributions.
2. Quoted in, *inter alia*, David Michaels, *Doubt Is Their Product: How Industry's Assault on Science Threatens Your Health* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), x. For original document, see Legacy Tobacco Documents Library at http://legacy.library.ucsf.edu/tid/nvs40f00.
3. Cf. Taner Akçam, *A Shameful Act: The Armenian Genocide and the Question of Turkish Responsibility* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2006), p. 184; Fatma Ülgen, "Reading Mustafa Kemal Atatürk on the Armenian Genocide of 1915," *Patterns of Prejudice,* vol. 44, no. 4 (2010), p. 390, and see also Ülgen, *Sabiha Gökçen's 80-Year-Old Secret: Kemalist Nation Formation and the Ottoman Armenians* (unpubl. Ph.D. thesis, University of California, San Diego, 2010), pp. 290ff.
4. See Richard D. Kloian, *The Armenian Genocide: News Accounts from the American Press, 1915–1922*, 4th ed. (Richmond, CA: Heritage Publishing, 2007).
5. "Tlön, Turkey, and the Armenian Genocide," *Armenian Weekly*, April 2012
6. See Michael Bobelian, *Children of Armenia: A Forgotten Genocide and the Century-Long Struggle for Justice* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2009), for an in-depth account.
7. For example, Congressional resolutions were passed in 1975 (House Joint Resolution 148) and 1984 (House Joint Resolution 247), and President Ronald Reagan referred to "the genocide of the Armenians" in a proclamation of April 22, 1981.
8. Most famously in the 1930's when MGM's plans to film Franz Werfel's *The*



The Armenian Museum of America,
a division of the Armenian Library and Museum of America, Inc., (ALMA)
joins Armenians around the world in remembering the countless victims of the Armenian Genocide of 1915–1922.

Forty Days of Musa Dagh were quashed. See Edward Minasian, *Musa Dagh* (Cold River Studio, 2007).

9. This was not an entirely new concept for Turkey. In the 1920's and 1930's Turkey worked to create a favorable image of itself in the United States, especially through the efforts of Admiral Mark Bristol and the American Friends of Turkey. See Bobelian, p. 77; Levon Marashlian, *The Armenian Question from Sevres to Lausanne* (unpubl. Ph.D. thesis, UCLA, 1992); Roger R. Trask, *American Response to Turkish Nationalism and Reform 1914-1939* (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minn. Press, 1971), p. 244.
10. See www.fara.gov/annualrpts.html.
11. On Robert K. Gray and Gray and Co., see Susan Trento, *The Power House: Robert Keith Gray and the Selling of Access and Influence in Washington* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992). Gray was an executive at Hill & Knowlton from the early 1960's until spinning off his own firm, Gray & Co., in 1981; and in 1986 Gray & Co. merged with Hill & Knowlton.
12. See "The Hill & Knowlton Documents: How the Tobacco Industry Launched Its Disinformation Campaign," a Staff Report, Majority Staff Subcommittee on Health and the Environment, U.S. House of Representatives, May 26, 1994, at http://legacy.library.ucsf.edu/tid/ehb20d00; Stanton A. Glantz, John Slade, Lisa A. Bero, and Deborah E. Barnes, eds., *The Cigarette Papers* (Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1998); Naomi Oreskes and Erik Conway, *Merchants of Doubt: How a Handful of Scientists Obscured the Truth on Issues from Tobacco Smoke to Global Warming* (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2005); David Michaels, *Doubt is Their Product: How Industry's Assault on Science Threatens Your Health* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008); Robert N. Proctor, *Golden Holocaust: Origins of the Cigarette Catastrophe and the Case for Abolition* (Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2012), etc.
13. Proctor, p. 222.
14. Devra Davis, *The Secret History of the War on Cancer* (New York: Basic Books, 2007), pp. 150-151.
15. See http://legacy.library.ucsf.edu/tid/brd30f00/pdf.
16. Hill himself suggested that the word "research" to appear in the name, presumably to bolster the appearance of scientific objectivity.
17. For the full "Frank Statement," see www.tobacco.neu.edu/litigation/cases/supportdocs/frank_ad.htm.
18. Proctor, p. 260.
19. *Ibid*., p. 261.
20. *Ibid*., pp. 278-279.
21. See http://legacy.library.ucsf.edu/tid/quo14e00.
22. See http://oag.ca.gov/tobacco/msa.
23. Ronald Goodbread, "RICO Convictions of Major Tobacco Companies Affirmed," in *The Daily Washington Law Reporter*, May 12, 2011; see www.dwlr.com/blog/2011-05-12/rico-convictions-major-tobacco-companies-affirmed.
24. Speros Vryonis, Jr., *The Turkish State and History: Clio Meets the Grey Wolf,* 2nd edition (Thessalonike: Institute for Balkan Studies, 1993), p. 86.
25. See Vryonis, pp. 115-116.
26. See Bobelian, esp. chapter "Legislating History."
27. *Ibid*., p. 87, and see exhibition book *The Age of Sultan Süleyman the Magnificent* (National Gallery of Art, Washington, and Harry N. Abrams, Inc., New York, 1987). Philip Morris International is a member of the American Turkish Council and reportedly lobbied against the 2007 Congressional genocide recognition resolution; see Kate Ackley, "Companies Line Up With Turkey: Many Fear Impact of Resolution on 1915 Killing of Armenians," *Roll Call*, March 28, 2007.
28. Vryonis, p. 116.
29. Bobelian, p. 206.
30. *Turkish Daily News*, Oct. 24, 2000.
31. Quoted in "Turkish MPs: Bush Administration Must Make Goodwill Gesture to Compensate for US House Committee Vote," www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav101107a.shtml.
32. "Professional Ethics and Denial of the Armenian Genocide," in Richard G. Hovannisian, ed., *Remembrance and Denial: The Case of the Armenian Genocide* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1999).
33. See Lou Ann Matossian, "Institute of Turkish Studies Chair was Ousted for Acknowledging Genocide," *Armenian Reporter*, May 31, 2008.
34. Proctor, p. 260.
35. A review of ITS grants on its website, which covers 1993 to the present, supports this.
36. Donald Quataert, "The Massacres of Ottoman Armenians and the Writing of Ottoman History," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History,* vol. 37, no. 2 (Autumn 2006), pp. 249, 258.
37. *Turkish Daily News*, Oct. 24, 2000.
38. Vryonis, pp. 110-111.
39. For a great deal more information, Vryonis's lengthy discussion of the advertisement in *The Turkish State and History* and "U.S. Academicians and Lobbying: Turkey Uses Advertisement as a Political Tool" (*Journal of the Armenian Assembly of America*, vol. 14, no. 1 [Spring 1987]) are recommended.
40. Proctor, pp. 262-263.
41. *Turkish Daily News*, Oct. 24, 2000.
42. To date, the most detailed examination of this is Jennifer Dixon, "Defending the Nation? Maintaining Turkey's Narrative of the Armenian Genocide," *South European Society and Politics*, vol. 15, no. 3, September 2010, pp. 467–485.
43. See http://unews.utah.edu/old/p/031009-1.html. The formal name of the project is "The Origins of Modern Ethnic Cleansing: The Collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the Emergence of Nation States in the Balkans and Caucasus."

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2.0 BLAMING THE VICTIMS

By Sara Elise Brown and Henry C. Theriault

"Blaming the victim" is a tried and true method of genocide rationalization and denial, and has been used in case after case: "The Jews" were against Germany to undermine it (by supposedly creating "Bolshevism," for instance, they had traitorously sold Germany out in World War I, or had even declared "war" against Germany). Armenians were in revolt, or were in league with the Russians against the Ottoman Empire, or even were committing genocide against Turks and other Muslims. Rwandan Tutsis were going to commit genocide against the Hutus if they were not killed off first. Indigenous Guatemalans were in league with leftist guerrillas and communists. Bosnians were committing mass rape against Serbian women and were the military aggressors. Tasmanians were killing English settlers' livestock. The "Indians" were warlike savages who went around scalping (an English invention, for use in Ireland, by the way) any whites they could find, kidnapping and raping European women, massacring innocent whites, and anything else colonists could think of—that is, all of the atrocities that the Europeans were committing against the Native Americans—including being soulless heathens undermining Christianity.

Just as blaming the victim is a denial tactic, it is also a frequent motivator for participation in a genocide. Part of the reason this tactic is so popular with deniers is that it resonates with the propaganda used by perpetrators to motivate participation in a genocide itself. For instance, as Rwandan genocide survivor Yannick Tona explains, one young Hutu man who was raised by his parents turned against his family as a result of extremist propaganda that blamed the Tutsis for their alleged violent and oppressive agenda against the Hutus. Similarly, by blaming the victims for their real or perceived threat, denialists go so far as to lay the blame for any acts of violence squarely on the shoulders of the victims. No longer are the victims blamed simply to rationalize violence that will be recognized as the perpetrators', but perpetrator violence itself is recast as if perpetrated by the actual victims. Through shamelessly circular reasoning, deniers' own victim-blaming lends credence to documents capturing the rhetoric that incited genocide in the first place, while those sources lend credence to deniers' arguments as "historical evidence."

The tactic is not unique to genocide and related mass violence, of course. This month we learn that a girl in Maldives who was sexually abused by her stepfather for years, a stepfather who murdered the baby she bore as a result of his rapes, has been convicted of having sex outside of marriage and will be whipped with 100 lashes (a horrifically painful and quite possibly permanently disabling torture, for those used to Hollywood glorifications of the whipping victim), while her demented torturer faces no responsibility for his inhuman brutality against a child. A recent rape in Steubenville, Ohio, is another illustration. In that case, the victim of the sexual assaults documented on video is being blamed for consuming alcohol and is, in the most predictable fashion, being castigated for prior sexual conduct.

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Sartre captures the depth of such blaming in *Anti-Semite and Jew*. Even when the anti-Semite is confronted with a host of reasons for why "the Jew" is not the contemptible creature s/he believes and why "the Jew" is not "to blame," the anti-Semite still maintains that there is just "something" about Jews that s/he does not like, as if his/her attitude is a reaction to an actual characteristic of "Jews" rather than evidence of a groundless and irrational prejudice. It is something about "the Jews" that causes the prejudices that victimize them, and thus "the Jews" are at fault.

As incessant as blaming the victim is, however, it has long been assumed that those committed to human rights were in struggle against the strategy. But in recent years, a disturbing new trend has emerged in genocide studies circles that has committed some scholars to academic biases that blame victims in a way that might be worse than deniers' historical falsifications, because it *pre-emptively* attacks members of genocide victim groups. This is the new scholarship on "cycles of violence." Scholars such as René Lemarchand, Martin Shaw, and Cathy Carmichael have been presenting analyses that construe contemporary mass violence as the function of victims seeking revenge or reacting to past mass violence, and future mass violence as the expected actions of today's victims. At the risk of simplifying complex analyses, they focus their attention on the ways that former victim groups become perpetrators of later mass violence. Some of these scholars attended, for instance, the University of Antwerp's otherwise strong experts' workshop on genocide, hosted by the Universitair Centrum Sint Ignatius Antwerpen in 2011.

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For such scholars, there is something about being victimized that causes victims to adopt perpetrator mentalities. The logic is similar to the claim that individuals sexually or physically abused as children are more likely to become abusers as adults. Surely, if one looks carefully enough, one will find a history of abuse in the past of many adult abusers. Amongst genocide scholars, this line of thinking leads to the attribution of violent characteristics to victim groups. Quick to follow is blame, or at the very least suspicions against the victim groups, accusing them of perpetration of violence.

Many "cycles of violence" scholars have made valuable contributions in the field of conflict prevention as well as post-violence reconstruction and rehabilitation. In order to prevent recycling of the violence, scholars inform activists, policy makers, and humanitarians on strategies to rehabilitate, re-educate, and promote reconciliation among the population.

While it is true, according to Barbara Harff's work, that regions that experience inter-ethnic violence are significantly more likely to experience a recurrence of the violence, this is not directly related to the theories posited by "cycles of violence" scholars.

There are three major conceptual fallacies underlying their logic. First, "cycles of violence" scholars root their findings in research that emphasizes positive case studies, whereby instances of violence are perpetrated by the victim group, and ignores negative cases, where the cause of violence is not a result of victim groups. As a result, such findings, buttressed by carefully selecting from positive case studies and by disregarding negative case studies, do not provide a sound foundation for critical social science research. To determine whether or not there is actually a phenomenon of victims becoming perpetrators, such scholars would need to look at all cases of victimization and then compare the rates at which former victim groups commit mass violence to the rates at which non-victim groups perpetrate. While the authors are not aware of such a comprehensive study, a cursory reflection on the available cases suggests that while some former victim groups become perpetrators of later mass violence, victim groups do so at no greater rate (and perhaps at a lower rate) than non-victim groups. If this is so, then it is unlikely that their being victims is the key factor in cases where victims do become perpetrators.

This raises the second methodological flaw in the "cycles of violence" research. Believing wrongly that victim groups that perpetrate violence are doing so *because* of their collective victimization ignores victims groups that abstain from violence. In addition, this oversimplification overlooks a more nuanced understanding of why perpetrator groups participate in violence. It is not enough to state that a group perpetrated violence because they were once a victim group. "Cycles of violence" scholarship risks overlooking the complex underlying mobilization and sensitization processes that occur and are central to perpetration and, with it, opportunities for intervention and prevention. Comparative research is likely to reveal a range of factors that differentiate groups that commit mass violence from those that do not, factors independent of victim status. In fact, it is highly likely that similarities among perpetrator groups who were victims and those who were not far outweigh relevant similarities among different victim groups.

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Third, this framework taps into and redeploys a standard prejudice seen, for instance, in the general public when confronting endangered species. We impose on victim groups an impossibly high standard and exclude those who do not meet it from the roles of victims. In instances of violence, human rights scholars and activists often engage with the weakest and most disenfranchised of the population. This makes sense as this group is most likely to be targeted. On the whole, it is difficult to galvanize the international community on behalf of a stronger power; a selective favoritism lies with the weak. In instances of genocide, victim groups evoke sympathy, galvanizing aid and assistance. As many have pointed out for years, just like endangered animals that are cute and cuddly get most of the attention, while other species in just as desperate situations are virtually ignored in popular movements, groups that capture the hearts of the global community because of their apparent unthreatening vulnerability and utter passivity (usually the result of the force they are facing) are considered true victims, while those that try to defend themselves, especially if they have even moderate success, are excluded from support or consideration. Victim groups selected for consideration are stripped of their agency and expected, as beneficiaries, to *receive*, but not to act. Victims must stay in this pre-set victim mold; they cannot progress too far or too quickly. In some instances, when they take deliberate action to ensure their security, activists, politicians, and scholars alike become alarmed. Indeed, victim groups with members who advocate for historical justice for the group are liable to be subject to a special variation of Blame the Victims 2.0, the castigation of advocacy groups and reparations movements as extremist nationalists. Self-advocacy, which dominant groups and nation-states do routinely, is considered a vice for weaker groups—precisely the groups who have the most change to advocate for and are the least able to abuse their situation. The viewpoint also threatens to devolve into the kind of logic of perpetual, timeless, irrational ethno-national conflict—precisely the viewpoint that allowed the U.S. government and press not only to ignore but also to avoid the real reasons for genocide in the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda as they occurred.

Rwanda is a frequently cited case study for "cycles of violence" scholars and gives insight into the lens that mars their analysis. Scholars appear almost uncomfortable with Rwanda's progress since the 1994 genocide. This discomfort reached its apex after Rwanda's intervention in Congo; following the flight of many genocide perpetrators into Congo and the resulting instability on their western border, Rwanda took action, invading Congo, forcibly closing the refugee camps along the border, and tracking many militia-members deep in Congo. The killings that followed, primarily of fighting-age Hutu men, likely constitute crimes of war. But unable to shake off the lens that framed the 1994 genocide and its analysis, the "cycles of violence" scholars and activists looked to the Rwandan military's actions in Congo and cried "genocide perpetrated by victims!"

They were unable to look beyond the victim label that has been assigned Rwanda's surviving Tutsi community. Therefore, the Rwandan Patriotic Army's incursion into Congo was not analyzed by "cycles of violence" scholars as an act of invasion by one sovereign power into another independent state. Instead it was oversimplified as vengeance-taking by a victim group blinded by trauma and their own victimization.

What is more, the focus on victims becoming perpetrators ignores the real problem—that unless something substantive is done to address the violence against the victims, the harms resulting from it, as well as the attitudes and power of the perpetrator group, will further marginalize and disenfranchise the victim group. Weakened socially, economically, politically and culturally through acts of mass violence, expropriation of property, rape, and other atrocities, the victim group is vulnerable and liable to future victimization. All the while, the perpetrator group, emboldened by impunity and strengthened by the gains made through genocide, is in a position of strength and more likely to commit mass violence.

Ultimately, scholars imposing the "cycles of violence" model favor simplification through labeling instead of in-depth analysis that recognizes the intricacies of mass violence. Genocide prevention and intervention depends on a more nuanced framework. Effective mechanisms for genocide prevention and intervention require understanding the complex causes of mass violence, while efforts based on simplifications have the potential to foster not only ineffective, but potentially harmful, intervention and prevention efforts. □

PHOTOS: GULISOR AKKUM, THE ARMENIAN WEEKLY

Yes, Peace, but Between Whom, for What, and in What Context?

By Ayse Gunaysu

Is it true? Are things really changing in Turkey, the land of genocides, pogroms, repression, and a prolonged war for the past 30 years with its own Kurdish citizens? Is the war that has claimed more than 40,000 lives—mostly Kurdish—in Turkish Kurdistan really coming to an end? Is this nightmare, which has played out not only in the mountains but also in cities and towns, almost over, allowing for a normal life—a life that children and adults under 30 have never known?

These were the questions crucial not only for the Kurdish people's future in Turkey, but also for everyone who demanded real democracy, the full observance of human rights, equality, justice—in short, a better life to live. For us, the success of the Kurds' struggle meant the opening of the road that would lead us all to a more promising future.

But now, everything seems blurred and vague. It is as if we are walking on a tightrope and, at any moment, we can fall into a bottomless abyss. PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan's recent statements during the negotiations and, ultimately, his letter read out loud during the Newroz celebrations were a disappointment for many.

During the civil war, Newroz meant the violent intervention of security forces, sometimes with firearms, sometimes with tear gas and water cannons, causing deaths and injuries. It was a time of military raids in towns and rural villages, a time when villagers were arrested en masse and taken away, when civilians were killed during military operations. Kurdish human rights fighters, lawyers, and journalists were kidnapped and found dead by the roadside, and sometimes not found at all. During these years, more than 3,000 villages were evacuated and burned down. More than 3 million Kurds had to leave their homes and migrate to nearby towns and cities, totally helpless, jobless, unable to earn a living. Forests were set on fire by the soldiers. The whole landscape turned into a desert—a bare land with ghostly images of destroyed villages, with the remains of houses blackened by fire.

Newroz, in those years, was invariably associated with brutality and loss of human lives. It was during the Newroz celebrations of 1992 that nearly 140 civilians were killed

and hundreds of others injured following the security forces' attack on demonstrators, and the subsequent operations—accompanied by bombings—carried out in the province of Şırnak and its district Cizre. Those nightmarish "celebrations" were followed by a large wave of Kurdish immigration to nearby cities.

HOPES FOR PEACE

This year's Newroz celebrations were held in dramatically different circumstances. The so-called "Peace Process" had started; negotiations with Öcalan, who had been isolated in prison for 14 years, were ongoing. Deputies of the Peace and Democracy Party (BDP) visited him twice. Letters between Öcalan and the PKK headquarters in Qandil, in Iraqi Kurdistan, were exchanged.

The celebrations everywhere, both in a number of western provinces, including Istanbul, and in the Kurdish provinces, particularly in Diyarbakir, were spectacular. It was for the first time a real celebration with enthusiastic festivities. Hundreds of thousands of people came together, with women dressed in bright colors, and children dancing and singing joyously.

All were waiting for Öcalan's letter to be read out loud in Kurdish and Turkish. He would make his final statement, the outcome of his "peace" talks with government authorities, in his cell.

In addition to the Kurds, and since the defeat of the Turkish left by military rule in 1980, veteran socialists and communists, and others who stood for democracy, human rights, and freedom, had all set their hopes on the Kurds' struggle against the establishment in Turkey. It was because the Kurdish political movement had done something that the Turkish left had always dreamed of, but never achieved, during its long years of struggle. The Kurdish political movement had mobilized masses of ordinary people, both in rural and urban areas, and integrated them into the struggle. It was this struggle that made it possible for the forces of democracy in Turkey to make progress—no matter how modest—in freedom of speech. It was not a coincidence that the Armenian Genocide started to be discussed in Turkey during the years of the Kurdish insurgency—an insurgency that could not be defeated in 30 years by the Turkish Armed Forces, Europe's biggest and the world's 8th biggest army, second only to that of the U.S. in NATO.

ÖCALAN CALLS FOR WITHDRAWAL

When Öcalan's letter was read in Diyarbakir—before an audience of hundreds of thousands, if not more than a million—declaring a cease-fire and instructing PKK guerrillas to withdraw beyond the borders, it was clear Öcalan was aware of the criticism against his statements in the minutes of his meeting BDP deputies during the "peace" process leaked to the press which resonated an overt antagonism towards non-Muslim peoples of Asia Minor. So he was careful to include Armenians and other peoples making up the Anatolian population in the scope of his endeavor to bring peace to the country.

In the aforementioned meeting with the BDP deputies, Öcalan had, for instance, referred to the "Armenian lobby" as a force that, historically, has never wanted peace in Anatolia. "The Armenian lobby is powerful. They want to dominate the agenda of 2015," he had said. The Kurds were marginalized during the creation of the Turkish Republic as a consequence of the efforts of the "Israeli lobby, the Armenians, and the Greeks, who had decided that their success would depend on marginalizing the Kurds," he continued. "This is an ongoing, thousand-year tradition." He had added, "After the Islamization of Anatolia, there has been Christian anger that has lasted a thousand years. Greeks, Armenians, and Jews claim rights to Anatolia. They don't want to give up their gains under the pretext of secularism and nationalism."

Despite some references to Armenians and other non-Muslims, Öcalan's Newroz letter—full of enthusiastic rhetoric about peace, fraternity, the peaceful coexistence of peoples of different beliefs and ethnicity, and a new era of peace—was no consolation to those of us who demand real justice in this country.

MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD BRINGS CHILLING MEMORIES TO MIND

The most alarming aspect of the letter was its emphasis on the Muslim Brotherhood, a brotherhood that saw the death, agony, plunder, and annihilation of the Christian children of Asia Minor. His reference to the Turks' and Kurds' "historical agreement of fraternity and solidarity under the flag of Islam" sounded like an ominous prophecy. His praise of the so-called "Liberation War" of Turkey, which was, in fact, the continuation of the genocide of the Armenians, Assyrians and Anatolian Greeks, was a perfect echo of the Turkish official mindset. "During World War I, Turkish and Kurdish soldiers fell together as martyrs in the Dardanelles. They fought together in Turkey's Independence War, and together opened the 1920 National Assembly. What our mutual past shows is the mutual necessity of forming our future together. The spirit of the 1920 National Assembly enlightens the upcoming era," he said. What he doesn't mention is that the spirit of 1920 was a genocidal spirit that was determined to complete the annihilation process of Christians and also to repress Kurdish national identity with bloodshed.

The result is that now, people in Turkey who stand for human rights, democracy, and peace are forced to choose between one of two evils: Either be presented as one who does not want peace, or support something that may be a reconciliation between Kurds and Turks but not real peace for all in Turkey.

IS ÖCALAN A TRUE REPRESENTATIVE?

I know and respect millions of Kurdish people's devotion to their leader Öcalan. But I also know that Öcalan and the politically conscious Kurdish people, as well as some sections of Kurdish political

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movement are not one and the same. There is the Kurdish political movement, with its political party, its armed units in the mountains, and the millions who protest courageously at the risk of being shot; and there is Öcalan, who has been confined to a solitary cell for 14 years, disconnected from realities on the ground.

After all, it is the Kurdish people who lost family members in unsolved murders; who cried after their children joined the guerrilla movement, and were later found dead, half burnt, with their eyes scratched out; and who stood totally armless against tanks and panzers in revolt against repression. And it is the guerrilla fighters who put their lives at risk for so many years in the mountains.

Karayılan, one of the chief commanders of the PKK, in an interview with the journalist Hasan Cemal, repeatedly confirmed that while they are loyal to their leader, they had some reservations:

"There will be no withdrawal without the state doing its share."

"Mid-level command elements especially have some concerns; we have to persuade them."

"Yesterday I talked with 250 mid-level people. They say, 'We came here to wage war, and we've been here for 10 years. We've come to the point of accomplishing a result, then you ask us to stop.'"

"At this point, leader Apo [Öcalan] should get involved in the persuasion process, and for this reason direct contact between Öcalan and the Qandil headquarters should be established."

Karayılan's criticism of the BDP co-chair, Selahattin Demirtaş, was very unusual. Demirtaş had recently said that 99 percent of the armed campaign of the PKK was over, and that the resolution of the remaining 1 percent was up to the government. "This is a shallow approach by the BDP," commented Karayılan. "This shows that they cannot comprehend the retreat process in depth. Complete finalization of the armed campaign is not such a simple issue."

KURDS: BOTH PERPETRATORS AND VICTIMS

Now the crucial point: Many local Kurds in Western Armenia, not only the chieftains but also ordinary villagers, were, alongside with the Turks and other Muslim peoples, the perpetrators of the genocide of the Armenians and Assyrians. They were not only "tools" that were "used" by the Progress and Union Committee (CUP), as some of the Kurdish political leaders have put it; in many places and in many instances, they were quite conscious of what they were doing. They were not the decision-makers but the implementers, unaware that soon they would fall victim to, and be forced to revolt against, their accomplices in the genocide—the successors of the same ruling power they cooperated with in exterminating their Christian neighbors.

The history of the Turkish Republic is the history of Kurdish uprisings and their violent repression through bloodshed. The last uprising, which was the longest, was not based purely on nationalistic aspirations, but involved leftist, even Marxist, elements, with much emphasis on freedom, equality, and human rights, not only for Kurds but for all in Turkey. And it was the first and longest-lasting radical opposition movement in the history of the Republic, and was not only able to undermine at least the ideological and moral supremacy of the establishment, but also to challenge with some success the "invincible" domestic image of the Turkish military.

Those in the Turkish media, then, who criticized Abdullah Öcalan's statements, both in the meeting minutes and his letter of cease-fire, were calling on the Kurdish opposition to *not* enter into a deceitful truce with this system of annihilation and denial.

CAN THEY ALSO BE PEACEMAKERS?

Of course, the responsibility rests on the shoulders of the Kurdish oppositionists to lead the way for the acknowledgment of the Kurdish people's complicity in the genocide of the Christian peoples of Anatolia—the Armenians, Assyrians, and Greeks—and take steps toward the restitution of the immense losses they suffered.

Without fulfilling this responsibility, the Kurdish side of the conflict cannot possibly pave the way for, and urge the Turkish state to agree to, a real peace—the ultimate sovereignty of justice throughout the country.

The Kurds are both perpetrators and victims, the victim of their own comrade-in-arms during the genocide. In order to be the peacemakers now, they must refuse Öcalan's offer of a so-called "peace" between Turks and Kurds based on the common denominator of Islamic brotherhood, the driving force behind the genocide. □