

The Collective Memory of the Armenian Genocide

By

Mari Hovhannisyan

Submitted to

Central European University

Department of Political Science

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

Supervisor: Professor Nenad Dimitrijevic

Budapest, Hungary

(2010)

Acknowledgements

Hereby I would like to thank all those people who assisted me while writing my thesis. This research would not have been possible without the enormous support of my professors, colleagues, family and friends. I would like to express my deepest gratitude to Professor Nenad Dimitrijevic for the supervision of my research, his professional guidance, immediate comments and encouragement throughout this project. Warmest thanks to my Academic Writing instructor Eszter Timar, who was so patient with me and throughout the whole academic year and the whole thesis writing process assisted me and encouraged me.

I would like to thank the people who kindly agreed to give me interviews that were a significant part of my research. I am grateful to Harutyun Marutyan, Hayk Demoyan and the staff of the Agos newspapers. My special thanks address to Bagrad Esdugian and his family for their support during my stay in Istanbul.

Abstract

This thesis reveals the Armenians' perception and the collective memory of the 1915's Genocide committed by the Young Turks. I argue that throughout historical transitions, authoritarian regime pressure, and the foreign environment of the Armenian Diaspora the collective memory is very much alive and is part of the national identity. The incentives of keeping the memory of the Genocide alive are the following: the continuous Turkish denial, the massacres of 1988 in the Azerbaijani city Sumgait and the fact that the memory of the Genocide has reshaped the Armenians' national identity. This research can be a pattern for a comparative study of victimized nations' memory and identity.

Table of Content

THE COLLECTIVE MEMORY OF THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE.....	1
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	I
ABSTRACT	II
INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER ONE - THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE: DEFINITION, HISTORICAL OVERVIEW AND IDEOLOGY	5
1.1 DEFINITION OF THE GENOCIDE	5
1.2 HISTORICAL OVERVIEW	6
CHAPTER TWO - THE COLLECTIVE MEMORY.....	12
2.1 PRESENTISM VERSUS PASTISM	12
2.2 EVENTS AND PROCESSES THAT CONTRIBUTED TO THE ‘REVIVAL OF MEMORY’	20
CHAPTER THREE - AN OVERVIEW OF THE MAIN FORMS OF THE TURKISH DENIAL OF THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE.....	25
3.1 LITERAL DENIAL	25
3.2 INTERPRETIVE DENIAL	34
3.3 IMPLICATORY DENIAL	41
CONCLUSION.....	44
REFERENCES LIST.....	47
APPENDIX	50

Introduction

Knowledge of the past is of great importance for the analysis, evaluation, and reformation of a nation's character and identity. The perception of the past is essential for the formation of one's future. Whatever the past is – good or bad, glorious or miserable, infamous or celebrated, difficult or unruffled; it leaves legacies that can not be neglected. Reshaping the past is impossible, but it is possible and crucial to acknowledge the past and shape the future having the past as a lesson to learn from. These statements are essential especially in the case of a difficult past. The Armenian experiences of the Genocide in 1915 and later mass atrocities during the Karabakh movement in 1988 have left their trace on the nation's identity.

The Armenians have often been told “Let bygones be bygones” and follow the slogan saying “We cannot change the past, so let's move forward” and adopt the principle of forgetting (Forsberg, 2003, p. 68). If forgetting is the ‘preferred’ alternative, then the question comes by whom. Can a new regime erase the memory of the past? Isn't the tragedy of the past a heritage of the nation and can it be separated from its history? Perhaps injustice of the past plays the role of a bridging tie between the nation's origins and its national identity.

The 20th century is called an era of mass atrocities, a century of genocides. And the Armenian Genocide perpetrated by Turks in the Ottoman Empire is considered to be the first in the list (Balakian, 1998, p.24; Dadrian, 2004, p 32, Hovhannisian, 1971, p.12), which dramatically changed the Armenian national character.

A number of books have been published on the historical event analyzing the motivations and stages of the Genocide. There has been growing interest in studying the

motives of denial of the past atrocities and genocides. Gerard Libardian in the book titled “A Crime of Silence: The Armenian Genocide” has collected works of renowned authors presenting and analyzing the ideology, motives, implementation and later the testimonies of the Armenian Genocide (Libardian, Gerard, 1985). Peter Balakian in “The Burning Tigris: A History of the Armenian Genocide” starts the story from the 1890s, discusses the origins of the ‘Armenian Question’, describes Hamidian massacres¹, the rise of the Young Turks and presents American witnesses. Similarly, there are some publications presenting the historical background and giving later developments and/or comparing the events with the Holocaust – Melson, Robert “Revolution and Genocide: On the Origins of the Armenian Genocide and the Holocaust (1992), Florence Marian “Why Genocide? The Armenian and Jewish Experience in Perspective (1990), “The Armenian Genocide in Perspective” edited by Richard Hovhannisian (1991), “The History of the Armenian Genocide: Ethnic Conflict from the Balkans to Anatolia to the Caucasus” by Vahakn N. Dadrian (1995). There are books analyzing the origins of the conflict, some others present the accounts of survivors and/or eyewitnesses – “Warrant for Genocide: Key Elements of Turko – Armenians Conflict” by Vahakn N. Dadrian (1999), “Survivors: The Oral History of the Armenian Genocide” written by Donald E. Miller and Lorna Touryan Miller (1999), “And Those Who Continued Living in Turkey after 1915: The Metamorphosis of the Post – Genocide Armenian Identity as Reflected in Artistic Literature” by Rubina Perroomian (2008). The book “United States: Official Documents on the Armenian Genocide” by Ara Sarafian presents archived documents on the Armenian Genocide (1993).

It was of special interest to me to read and refer to the book titled “A Shameful Act: The Armenian Genocide and the Question of Turkish Responsibility” by Turkish author Tanier Akcam (2007) arguing that the Turkish official position on the historical fact of 1915

¹ The Hamidian massacres took place from 1894 – 1896 and approximately 300 000 Armenians were killed. The massacres were called Hamidian after Abdul Hamid II who was giving the orders of mass killings (Balakian, 2005, p. 35 -49).

is not factual. “Cultural and Ethical Legacies: The Armenian Genocide” is addressing the questions of the Genocide’s history, its illustration in art, literature, music, drawing a comparison between the Armenians’ and Jews’ experience, examining the possibility of reconciliation after the Genocide (Hovhannisian, Richard, 2008). There has also been an analysis of the Genocide effect on the national identity. The recently published book by Harutyun Marutyan “Iconography of Armenian Identity: The Memory of Genocide and Karabagh Movement” (2009) analyzes the “keystone elements of national identity”, the role of the Armenian Genocide and later massacres committed against Armenians on the formation of national identity.

In addition to finding out about the exact events of history, survivors’ accounts, comparison with other similar events, etc., it is of interest to learn how the Armenians perceive the Genocide, what transformations the collective memory of the Armenian Genocide has passed through, the factors keeping alive the collective memory of the past tragedy, and to analyze whether the regime change – from Soviet Socialist Republic to independent state- can be perceived as a factor or not. Throughout my thesis I have tried to answer these questions and thus fill in that scientific gap.

In this thesis I argue that the Turkish continuous denial of the Genocide acts as an incentive for the Armenians to the search for the truth. My analysis shows that the Turkish denial is one of the key factors keeping the collective memory of the Armenians alive, which is elaborated in chapter three. I analyze whether the atrocities committed against the Armenians in the Azerbaijani city Sumgait during the Karabakh movement were reminders for the Armenians of their recent sufferings in Western Armenia. Both my interviews and the current literature prove my initial guess that there is a close link between these two tragedies in terms of remembering the past. I also discuss whether the communication between the Armenians living in Armenia and the Diaspora was influential in terms of analyzing its

difficult past. My analysis show that this assumption is not plausible as in both communities the memory of the Genocide is alive in spite of different experience and different perception of the tragedy.

My work is based on the critical reading of the existing literature on the Armenian Genocide analysis, and content analysis of different historical documents and media, as well as semi - structured interviews. To get the answers to my questions I have done the part of my research in Turkey, Istanbul, where I have conducted interviews with Turkish scholars to identify the motives of their denial. Then I continued my work in Armenia, where I analyzed the documentaries at the Armenian Genocide Museum- Institute and had interviews with Armenian intellectuals who have dealt with the issue and have experienced the change. For my first argument I used both content analysis and interviews. For argument II I looked through the literature and did interviews, and for my argument III I again analyze literature and conducted interviews.

Chapter One - The Armenian Genocide: Definition, Historical Overview and Ideology

1.1 Definition of the Genocide

The term genocide has long been analyzed by scholars since the middle of the 20th century. It was contrived by Raphael Lemkin a Polish- Jewish lawyer in 1944 as a descendent of a family that suffered during the Jewish Holocaust. He combined the word “geno” from the Greek word for tribe or race, with “cide” from the Latin word killing (Lemkin, 1944, p.79).

Mary Anne Warren an American writer and philosophy professor puts the concept of genocide in the following way.

The concept of genocide, as it is commonly understood, does not apply only to those actions which result in the complete extermination of a race of people Sometimes it is appropriate to speak of certain actions as genocidal atrocities, even though many members of the victimized race or culture survive.... Furthermore, not all instances of genocide involve direct or deliberate killing. Deaths or cultural disintegration deliberately or negligently brought about starvation, disease or neglect may also be genocidal. Indeed, some acts of genocide do not involve deaths at all, but rather consist in the wrongful denial of the right to reproduce. (Warren quoted in Jones *Gendercide and Genocide*, 2004, p.19).

However, while the precise definition of the term has been different among scholars, the legal definition is found in the 1948 United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. According to Article 2 of this Convention, genocide is a crime and is one of the following acts intentionally committed to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such

- a. Killing members of the group;
- b. Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;
- c. Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical

destruction in whole or in part;

d. Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;

e. Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group (Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights: Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, 1948).

For the purpose of my arguments, I will rely on this definition of the term.

1.2 Historical Overview

To get a clear notion of the Armenians' perception of the Genocide, the influence of the transition from totalitarian to independent state on their collective memory, it is necessary to acknowledge the historical background of the nation.

The history of Armenians dates back to the 6th century B.C. (Mason, 2005, p. 59). By the 4th century Armenians were the first in the world to adopt Christianity (301 A.D.), and possessing a unique language, they built up a "unique, identifiable, ethno religious community", which became the basis for their collective identity (Croissant, 1998, p.4). Unlike the strong cultural and religious bases, Armenia's political life was fragile after 1400s, when the country was ruled by foreign powers. Being deprived of independence and their own legal administrative power to achieve their national objectives, Armenians relied on their religious and cultural power and in this regard the stake of assimilation did not seem plausible.

On the eve of World War I Armenia was divided into two parts between the Ottoman and Russian empires. Western Armenia was under Ottoman Turks' domination, while the Eastern part was ruled by the Romanov bureaucracy in the Russian Empire (Hovhannisian, 1971, p.1).

In the first centuries of the Ottoman domination, the Armenians had relatively better conditions in maintaining their national identity. To put it in Richard Hovhannisian's words "they learned to live in peace with their Muslim overlords and neighbors" (Hovhannisian, 1971, p.9). However, by the nineteenth century the circumstances drastically shifted.

The wane of the Ottoman Empire in 1908 brought the Young Turks to power and pushed the empire along a path of nationalist revolution, war and genocide. (Melson, 1992, p.144). On the eve of World War I the Young Turk government adopted a policy of Pan Turkism - the establishment of a mega - Turkish empire comprising all Turkish - speaking peoples of the Caucasus and Central Asia extending to China, intending to "Turkify" all ethnic minorities of the empire. The main concept of that ideology was the homogenization of the population. Being Christians, the Armenians were seen as the main obstacle of the realization of this policy. Thus, the extermination of the Armenians became a prerequisite for the fulfillment of the adopted policy. The other important part of the ideology was the gradual elimination from the government of those who could resist their plans. The leaders of *Ittihad ve Terakke* Party (Union and Progress) Talaat Pasha (the Minister of Interior), Enver Pasha (War Minister), and Jemal Pasha (the Minister of Navy) took control of the whole state and gave power to a few individuals to act freely while 'dealing with the gavurs'² without any accountability (Libaridian. 1985, p.40).

The outburst of World War I was extremely painful for the Armenians; Turks were requiring Armenians of Turkey to serve in the Turkish army during the war. Yet being subject to two different states, it was impossible. Moreover Armenians had already realized the danger coming from the government of Young Turks. Turks saw this refusal as treason, and the anger against the Armenians inevitably increased.

² Gavur is a Turkish word meaning unbeliever and those who were not Muslims were called 'gavurs'. Even today in some parts of Turkey, and mainly in Anatolia, Armenians are called 'gavur'.

While Armenians under the Russian Empire managed to get a temporary independence and establish the first republic of Armenia, called the Democratic Republic of Armenia, which existed from 1918 to 1920 (Hovhannisian, 1971, p.95-110), the western population was subjected to annihilation; approximately one and a half million Armenians perished between 1915 and 1923 (Dadrian, 1995, p.195, Hovhannisian, 1971, p.10, Hovhannisian, 2008, p.11, Melson, 1992, p.142). Before the exile there were 2 million Armenians living in Turkey. The decision for the deportation of all Armenians from Western Armenia (today known as Eastern Turkey) was adopted in late 1911. The Young Turks used World War I as a suitable opportunity for its implementation. Mass shootings, massacres, deportation and severe starvation were techniques of the Young Turks.

The genocide was organized by Talaat Pasha, the minister of the Interior, and Enver Pasha, the minister of War. According to the scheme the massacres were implemented in three phases. The first phase commenced on April 24 1915, when leaders of the Armenian community, hundreds of intellectuals were arrested and later killed. (Dadrian, 1995, p.204-209, Melson, 1992, p.144; [genocide-museum](#)). Consequently, this date is commemorated by Armenians as a day to remember all the victims of the Genocide.

The second phase was the “elimination of the able-bodied men” from the community. With the start of World War I, Armenian men between twenty and forty-five and months later between forty-five and sixty years of age were enlisted to serve in the army. With the hard work that the men were enforced to do, the able-bodied men were exhausted and later killed. (Balakian, 2003, p.176, [genocide-museum](#)).

The third phase was the annihilation of women, children and the elderly. Being completely defenseless, they had to obey the orders of the soldiers and commanders of the Turkish army. They were to leave their home and march in an unknown direction. Those who

survived the long way to the region of Deir el – Zor died "either of massacre, starvation and disease or were stuffed into caves and asphyxiated by brush fires". (Balakian, 2003, p.176).

The ideologists had also thought about the justifications of their plans to present to the ordinary Turks who had been living next to their Armenian neighbors for years and might wonder about their fates. The violence and genocidal actions were justified and presented to the public as the only way to protect the state from betrayers and foreign intervention.

In the time of the deportation and mass killings American Ambassador to Turkey H. Morgenthau wrote:

The real purpose of the deportation was robbery and destruction; it really represented a new method of massacre. When the Turkish authorities gave the order for these deportations, they were merely giving the death warrant to a whole race; they understood this well, and, in their conversations with me, they made no particular attempt to conceal the fact (Dadrian, 1995, p.225).

Leslie A. Davis, US Consul at Harput (a city in Eastern Anatolia) from 1915 to 1917, while describing the atrocities committed by Turks against Armenians, wrote to Henry Morgenthau: "A massacre, however horrible the word may sound, would be human in comparison" (Charny, 1999, p.65).

Thus, this was a well designed plan of solving the "question of Armenians" that is to obliterate the Armenians from their historical land and eternally get released from the 'great obstacle' on their way of founding a mega – Turkish Empire.

The planned scheme of the extermination of the Armenian population on the basis of their nationalistic ideology was obvious and recorded by diplomats of the time, eyewitnesses, later by survivors and by many undoubtedly respectful and honest scholars. Referring to the events of 1915, Winston Churchill wrote:

In 1915 the Turkish government began and ruthlessly carried out the infamous general massacre and deportation of Armenians in Asia Minor....the clearance of the race from Asia Minor was about as complete as such an act, on a scale so great, could well be... There is no reasonable doubt that this crime was planned and executed for political reasons. The opportunity presented itself for clearing Turkish soil of a Christian race

opposed to all Turkish ambitions, cherishing national ambitions that could be satisfied only at the expense of Turkey, and planned geographically between Turkish and Caucasian Moslems (Churchill quoted in Dadrian, 1995, p.220).

In the meantime, those who survived the Genocide either found shelter abroad or stayed in Turkey, disguising their nationality (Hovannisian, 1986,70). After the Genocide the Armenian Diaspora has become larger; according to some historians the Diaspora emerged after the Genocide, yet I agree with those who believe that the Armenian Diaspora started to be established earlier and the Genocide significantly enlarged it. As Peter Balakian states “by the mid 1890s in the United States there were about 10 000 Armenians” (Balakian, 2005, p.229).

Contrary to the distorted fates of the Armenians from the Western part that experienced the Genocide, those who got independence from the Russian Empire and established the first Republic of Armenia, became ultimately integrated into the USSR in 1920 (Hovhannisian, 1971, p.24).

Becoming a part of the Soviet Union, the Eastern Armenians hoped that the country would see economic progress and would be protected from any possible disasters in future. Definitely, I cannot neglect the fact that while being a part of the Soviet Union, Armenia made progress. However, the cost of that ‘*progress*’ [Italics are mine] was controversial. The “Great Purge” (a series of campaigns of political repression and persecutions during the Stalin’s governance) in 1937 and 1949 became a part of Armenian History (Figes, 2007, p. 227-235). This was a ‘*cleansing campaign*’ [Italics are mine] of those who were seen as ‘enemies’ of the Soviet state, particularly, this was Joseph Stalin’s efforts to eradicate challenges from past³ and potential opposition groups. Approximately a million people perished during this period throughout the Soviet Union (Figes, 2007, p. 235-245). Many Armenian political leaders, intellectuals, artists and just ordinary people became victims of

³ Old Marxists with different views were perceived as danger from the past.

the Great Purge. And a deep silence followed until the end of the 1950s and the beginning of 1960s (Marutyan, 2009, p. 29).

Chapter two - The Collective Memory

2.1 Presentism versus Pastism

Many renowned scholars have argued that the present is the result of the historical continuity and we cannot simply forget the past, moreover “we must carry the burden of the past with us” (Greiff quoted in Forsberg, 2003, p. 67). Collective response to atrocities is essential in terms of victims’ mental health and political integrity. A lack of proper addressing of the trauma can bring about “intergenerational transmission of trauma” (Minow, 2002, p.16). “Making the traumatic, repressed communal memories open, explicit, and conscious is said to have healing power...this is the only way to overcome the irrationality that springs from past trauma, and the only way to gain peace of mind” (Margalit, 2002, p.5). The question on behalf of transitional justice is “how to deal with the past” (LaCapra, 1998, p17; Papazian, 2008, 21).

Thus, we should not choose between remembering and forgetting (Minow, 2002, p.16) but the question is how to remember as “forgetting the extermination is part of the extermination itself” (Baudrillard quoted in Young, 1993, p.1). As Forsberg puts it by referring to Booth, “remembering past injustice is important, because we should give dignity to those who were not granted it in their time” (Forsberg, 2003, p.71). According to Dominick LaCapra, the past is a fact and shifting it is impossible, however, it is possible to influence the way it is addressed (LaCapra, 1998, p 19).

Hence, there is no doubt about remembering the past; it is a crucial precondition in terms of restoring justice, recovering from trauma and achieving consensus for the civilized future in which such events would never happen again. I argue that there can be a common way of addressing injustice done in the past. Historical background, cultural framework, the regime of the time and social environment are influential factors in addressing the past.

My interviews conducted in Yerevan revealed that in the Armenian reality remembering the past is out of the question at least in the scientific world. Hayk Demoyan, a historian and the director of the Armenian Genocide Museum - Institute, said in the interview:

Each country, nation has its own memory. Memory is that concept and obligation that shapes the particular country's and nation's identity. The landscape of memory that is formulated within the boundaries of a certain country or outside of it undeniably promotes the exchange of a certain cultural and political codes to the coming generation. If we try to remove the memory of all nations then it will turn into Babel. Memory promotes interaction within the neighbors, nation and subgroups (Yerevan, April 30, 2010).

However, it has long been debated among scholars whether the past shapes the present or it is the present that influences our perception of the past. The group of researchers who believe in "presentism" argue that the collective memory of the past is changeable due to the new values and social structure (Marutyan, 2009, p.14-15). In other words the way we remember our past greatly depends on the present social environment. According to George Herbert Mead, who built his theory in the 1920s and 1930s, the notion of the memory is drawn "from the standpoint of the new problem of today" (Marutyan, 2009, p. 14). The present gets its shape according to the current environment. Another scholar, with an explicit inclination to "presentism", Maurice Halbwachs puts the importance on the present conditions only as they influence the perception of the past.

The Armenian experience of the difficult past has shaped a certain kind of perception of both the past and the present. During the interview a Turkologist, Deputy Dean of the Oriental Studies Department at Yerevan State University, Ruben Melkonyan said:

All nations and people have the obligation to remember their past. But the Armenian nation has that obligation more and particularly the obligation to remember the Genocide as it is a certain part of our identity. And today, unfortunately, it is impossible to imagine the Armenian identity without the Genocide and without the memory of the Genocide. It would be strange if an Armenian did not have memory of the Genocide: it is perceived as betrayal or as a person who has a distorted memory. And this obligation is not only the manifestation of our tribute to our ancestors, to our victims, but it is also one of the means to restore our identity (Yerevan, April 29, 2010).

As Harutyun Marutyan puts it in his “Memory of Genocide as a factor: Current Situation and Possible Developments” “For each ethnic or national populace the memory abundant with experiences is not a burden that could be thrown down, but wealth that should be used properly” (Marutyan, 2008, p.97) .

The memory of the past is a part of the Armenian reality. Leaving behind the experience of the past just because it was difficult and horrifying is not acceptable for Armenians. At the same time, it is essential to emphasize that just after the tragedy many ‘direct’⁴ victims tried to forget what happened to them, they did not want to speak about it. Sargis Seropyan, the editor of the Armenian part of the Agos bilingual newspaper, during the interview confessed that his grandmother who survived the deportation and had lost many of her family did not speak much about it. “There was a generation just after the Genocide that was trying to forget or at least to hide the pain and in this way prevent their children from carrying that trauma”, said Sargis Seropyan.

This is what Cohen calls “cultures of victim denial” (Cohen, 2001, p.140). Although he speaks about the European Jews who denied the upcoming danger I see the same concept in the Armenian reality but after the calamity. This is the psychology of victimized people who just want to forget what had happened to them and live in everyday life, they believe that “Things whose existence is not morally possible cannot exist” (German adage quoted in Cohen, 2001, p.141). But this is just a temporary ‘self – protection’ from the nightmare of the past, which erases when the shock passes and there is no way to rush away from the reality. As an old Russian proverb says “Dwell on the past and you will lose an eye. Forget the past and you will lose both eyes” (Quoted in Minow, 2002, p.16).

However, contrary to “presentism” the theorists inclined to “pastism” claim that “every society, whatever its ideological climate, requires a sense of continuity with the past, and its

⁴ I am against using ‘direct’ and ‘indirect’ adjectives to describe victims as I think it is an offensive classification for human beings. Some were killed, forced to march the deserts and tortured, those who were not, got the memory which changed their identity and psychology.

enduring memories maintain this continuity” (Marutyan, 2009, p. 19). In the “pastism” ideology, the emphasis is on the existence of the past, which can lead to a proper understanding of the present. As Michael Schudson observed “The past becomes part of us; it shapes us, and influences our consciousness, whether we like it or not” (Schudson quoted in Marutyan, 2009, p.20).

In his interpretation, Mr. Melkonyan emphasized that the memory of the Genocide for Armenians is more than just a memory of the difficult past – it is unique in its sense:

The Genocide makes us think and re-evaluate our values; there is also the fact of the lost homeland. It was both a loss and distortion of identity as by losing a significant past of historical Armenia we lost our identity. An Armenian today lives with a little bit traumatic identity as he/she lives in a tenth of his/her lost homeland.

Thus, is it the puzzle that shapes the Armenians’ collective memory of the Genocide? How has the perception of the past modified in recent years, what factors have influenced the change? I would argue that the past experience that followed the Genocide has shaped the current perception. The geographical, political, and historical cleavage of the Armenians before and after the Genocide did not pass unnoticed. The social environments as well as the events preceding the Genocide were the crucial factors formulating the memory of the past. As Hayk Demoyan noticed: “The transformation of the memory occurs all the time; from generation to generation even within the living generation and even within those who experienced the Genocide. But the axis of the memory remains” (Yerevan, April 30, 2010).

Initially, when I started working on this topic, I conditionally divided the collective memory of the Armenian Genocide into three phases: during the Soviet Union, transitional period – from the Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic into independent State, and the modern times – the independent Republic of Armenia. The analysis of the existing literature and the interviews I conducted in some degree proved my original guess, yet there were discoveries that made me change my assumptions. There is no doubt that the Armenians living in

different communities have different perception of the Genocide due to the historical events they were exposed to and the present environment they live in. Yet it does not necessarily mean that the communication within communities has brought to the revival of the memory. The communities separately have kept the memory of the Genocide alive, and the communication just strengthened the relationships between them.

The Armenian Genocide and its memory was a closed subject in the first four decades of the Soviet Union. As Marutyan puts it “It was forbidden officially and non-officially, to speak, mention or write about the trauma caused by the Armenian Genocide” (Marutyan, 2009, p. 28). However unusual it is for our morality, it was usual during the totalitarian regime of the USSR.

This is perhaps the statement that got consensus among the scholars I met in Yerevan. For this Hayk Demoyan said:

During Stalin’s despotism people were scared to have any relationships with Turko-Armenia, i.e. people who came from the Ottoman Empire were trying to get released from that past and they were doing that consciously. The change of their last names even with two letters could have been fatal for them; if it associated with a name of a famous intellectual or a public figure they did their utmost to shift it. I have recorded two similar cases when in reality they had such relative connections but they denied that fact (Yerevan, April 30, 2010).

According to Ruben Safrastyan, the Director of the Institute of Oriental Studies of Armenian National Academy of Science, and a professor at Yerevan State University the memory of the Genocide was pressed and it was considered some kind of taboo topic during the Soviet Union and especially till the 1960s and only in the 1960s the memory experienced reutilization.

The silence or it is better to say the forced silence on the Genocide was often seen and interpreted as indifference or forgetfulness of the past. As John W. Mason stated in his work “Living in the Lie: The Armenian Intelligentsia in the Soviet Union” the Genocide has

different meaning for Armenians emphasizing that Soviet Armenians did not remember their past:

The image of the Armenian people as a nation of victims has been fostered more by the western Armenians of the Diaspora (especially those who settled in the United States) than by the eastern Armenians who inhabited present – day Armenia. It has been suggested by some historians that preserving the memory of the 1915 Genocide has become a means of keeping the Diaspora Armenian identity alive (Mason, 2005, p.59).

Thus, it is not correct to say that people did not speak about their past just because they wanted to forget it. Both my interviews and the literature I analyzed proved that the memory of the Genocide was alive even at the time of silence. As for the Diaspora I have to state that, unfortunately, the memory of the Genocide has remained the only connecting tie with their origins. Living abroad, in a foreign environment, possessing the language of the host country, mastering the traditions and customs of the other nation, the Armenians have only that memory that unifies them all.

Turkologist Ruben Melkonyan confirmed that the perception of the Genocide of the Armenian communities is different:

The collective memory of the Genocide had different manifestations among the Armenians. I am against drawing new margins and dividing Armenians into subgroups but in any case conditionally we can draw some lines. For instance, western Armenians those who experienced the deportation directly have deeper feelings, their pains are stronger as they were deported. But Armenians from other parts, for example from Eastern Armenia or from Nagorno Karabakh did not see that pain. Definitely, as compatriots they also bear that pain but the successors of the Western Armenians perceive that differently. That's why when we speak about the influence of the Genocide we conditionally divide them into subgroups. In the memories of the Western Armenians or their successors the trauma is dominating (Yerevan, April 29, 2010).

The fact that the Genocide is remembered differently by the Armenians does not establish that it is forgotten or left behind by the Armenians living in today's Armenia or Karabakh. The different perception has its reasonable justification. And the assumption that

the Armenians living in today's republic or even in Soviet Socialist Armenia were or are inclined to forget the Genocide is not correct. This was stated by Hayk Demoyan as well:

The Armenian Diaspora had formulated before the Genocide. It is a myth to say that the Diaspora is a result only of the Genocide. Definitely, it enlarged after the Genocide as many survivors enriched it.

The common Armenian ideology, which connects all the Armenians despite of their citizenship, their anthropological type, despite even their political and religious differences, is the collective memory of the Genocide. Many Armenians living in the present republic of Armenia are the successors of those survivors. Many of them left for abroad but a significant part of the survivors came to Armenia after the Genocide (Yerevan, April 30, 2010).

The Genocide is understood and valued quite differently among the Armenians of the Diaspora. Being a subject to a certain type of regime, the individual adopts the principles of that particular state and obeys to the set of rules established in that particular environment. Thus, an Armenian living in the United States would definitely have quite a different perception and approach to the issue than the one living in Turkey.

Bagrad Estugian the editor of the Armenian part of the Agos newspaper said:

Certainly, people perceive the Genocide differently. At first when many people were deported they did not have time to remember [after the exile, the survivors and first generation of the survivors]. They had to learn the language, culture, traditions, rules, and people of the new country they inhabited with. Thus, they left it for more peaceful time to remember, maybe mourn the loss of family, homeland, relatives, etc. And today also, they [Armenians] might differ from each other in the way they remember according to the environment they live in (Istanbul, April 25, 2010).

Similarly, in his interpretations Mr. Melkonyan highlights that there a difference whether we want it or not:

The different perception of the communities is quite natural. The Diaspora if we take them collectively is more strained because they were deported from their historical homeland. Being deported from the homeland they had the continuous conscience that they had lost their city, they felt a continuous nostalgia, and they were continuously conscience of being refugees. Finally, the Armenians living in France or in the United States realize that they are foreigners. They lived with the constant conscience that they had run away, that they had lost their lands, that they had been deported from their homes. And it is natural, that these should bring about stronger reaction. In Armenia these perceptions in comparison with the Diaspora are a little bit different.

Why? Because the Armenians settled in Armenia, even those who came from Western part already live in the homeland and, unlike for instance, an American Armenian, they had lost only a part of their lands. The Armenians living in Armenia (it could be Soviet Armenia, or today's Armenia) had the feeling of the state: he/she lives in the Republic of Armenia, he/she is a citizen of Armenia, has a flag, anthem, etc.. The Diaspora Armenian is deprived even of that.

Thus, the different perception is understandable. People who are subjected to different environment, have different living conditions and different opportunities, have different psychology, which has a direct influence on the way they memorize things and events even if that events are common among their kindred.

Coming back to the Soviet period it is important to state that it was only after Stalin's death in 1953 that the '*chains*' [Italic are mine] of memory and human minds were re-visited and the tragedies of the past spoken about. On the day of the commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the Genocide about one hundred thousands Armenians went to the streets with posters demanding the recognition and tribute to their forefathers. It was only in 1965 that the Armenians could publicly give tribute to the victims of the first Genocide of the century and two years later with the enormous endeavors the Armenians managed to get permission and means from the Soviet rulers to build the Genocide Monument (Marutyan, 2009, p.39; genocide-museum.com). As Hayk Demoyan emphasized during the interview it was a unique event in its sense and throughout the whole Soviet Union, when people made demonstrations, went on strikes although realizing the danger of their actions⁵.

Afterwards, the Rubicon had been passed and the yearly commemoration of the Genocide was reality. Yet there were other factors that influenced the Armenian nation not only to keep alive the memory of the injustice committed against them at the beginning of the century but also demand for restoring justice.

⁵ Many people were sentenced and there was even an order to take out the army against the peaceful population.

2.2 Events and Processes that Contributed to the 'Revival of Memory'

The Soviet Union was a society “where remembering was dangerous” and much could not be done thus, the Genocide remained a historical fact with an open nerve and the Karabagh movement in 1989 and the war with Azerbaijan were new experiences for Armenians (Dudwick, 1997, p.69). The new traumas were mixed and the past was seen through the present. Particularly, it was the atrocities committed against the Armenians in the Azerbaijani city Sumgait that awoke the memory of the Genocide.

On February 27, 1988, for three continuous days in the presence of the Soviet Army the Azerbaijanis organized mass killings and caused public disorder in Sumgait against Armenians. Official data admitted the murder of 26 citizens of Armenian origin; according to unofficial data there were 115, 197 and even several hundred killed Armenians. As Harutyun Marutyan states “the method of killing was the same as that used by the Turks during the Genocide of Armenians at the beginning of the twentieth century. The Armenians were beaten, tortured, raped, and thrown out of windows, slain with metal rods and knives, chopped with axes, beheaded and burnt in fires...” (Marutyan, 2009, p.93).

The interviews conducted with the observers of the Sumgait massacres confirm similar cruelty between Ottoman Turks and Azeri Turks. In “Remembrance and denial: the case of the Armenian Genocide” (1999) Donald E. Miller presents the horrifying accounts of the Armenians living in Sumgait and in Baku:

My husband's relative was living in Sumgait and he saw everything from his balcony. He saw how a girl was stripped and forced to dance on the street and how they were extinguishing cigarette butts on her skin. He saw it all with his own eyes. When he was telling us about it, he was nervously shaking and crying (Miller. 1999. p. 191)

Another survivor of the Sumgait massacre was trembling when remembering the brutality of intoxicated soldiers:

Our building was surrounded and they started breaking our windows and doors. I told my son 'Run for your life'. And he took off. They had cut our electricity, but not that of the Turks. The killings had begun...I hid my neighbor's house and gave away all my jewelry. Had I not, they would have killed me, too. But the soldiers came. As soon as they came, my neighbor, my Turkish neighbor that was hiding me, said: 'You've got to go, because the soldiers are here'. I found that the soldiers were carrying the injured, the sick, and the hurt to the hospital. I came out and I saw bodies everywhere. They had poured benzene on them and burned them. Windows were all broken, the doors were broken, the house was destroyed, and they had killed my husband" later the woman found out that her son also had been killed (Miller, 1999, p.190).

Sumgait was a new tragedy Armenians were exposed to and as Hayk Demoyan noticed it was not unexpected:

Sumgait came to prove what the nation had in its sub-consciousness. There was the stereotype of the slaughterer, which became active in their consciousness immediately after the atrocities in Sumgait.

There is no doubt that the massacre in Sumgait reminded the Armenians of the calamity of 1915. On the seventh day⁶ of the mass killings the Armenians in Yerevan marched to Tsitsernakaberd, the Genocide Memorial, with photos of the Sumgait victims and the photos of the Armenian intellectuals that were killed on April 24, 1915. As Marutyan states "another similarity between the recent and old victims is the fact that the cross -stone commemorating the victims of Sumgait was placed within the territory of the Genocide Memorial, and exactly on April 24" (Marutyan, 2009, p.96).

The posters carried by the Armenians on April 24, 1988 were verifications of the fact that Armenians saw the Sumgait massacres as the continuation of the Genocide. Some of them were so influential that it seems there is no need for interpretation:

"The events in Sumgait are the sequence of 1915 Genocide".

⁶ According to the Armenian tradition the seventh and fortieth days after the death and the completion of the first year is remembered (Marutyan, 2009, p.94).

“Sumgait is a continuation of the Mets Yeghern⁷”.

“Reluctance to acknowledge the 1915 Genocide led to the Genocide of 1988”.

“Had the Soviet Government recognized the Genocide of 1915, there would have been no Sumgait in 1988”.

“Humanity is obliged to recognize the fact of the 1915 Genocide for Sumgait never to be repeated” (Marutyan, 2009, p.100).

This is highly emphasized by the fact that during the Karabakh movement and already during the war Turkey supported Azerbaijan with armaments and military equipment. Moreover, in 1991 the Turkish newspaper “Milliyet” wrote: “In case Armenians organize an *en mass* attack on Karabakh, Turkey will have to intervene” (Demoyan, 2003, p.4).

The Karabakh war⁸ importantly contributed to restoring the Armenians’ identity as the memory of the Genocide silenced for several decades– with the important, above mentioned exception of 1965 demonstrations - was made alive. This statement was confirmed by the interviewees I met in Yerevan. To my question what role the Karabakh movement had in the awakening of the Genocide memory, Mr. Melkonyan answered:

After the Genocide we had a need of victory, of a change of our status, we needed a victory for restoring our identity. The image of the enemy had long remained in our memory. The manifestations of national identity could not be clear as the Soviet Union by its nature was a totalitarian regime. But I would describe that period as a boiling pan. The promoting power of 60-70s’ actions was the memory of the Genocide, which very often led them to extreme strides. Even during the Second World War the Armenians in their sub consciousness were fighting not against the Germans but against Turks as the latter were Germany’s ally (Yerevan, April 29, 2010).

Mr. Melkonyan told a real story that happened during World War II. Once a peasant was asked whether he knew who the enemy was he was going to fight on the front. The man answered: ‘I do not know who your enemy is, but mine is the Turk’.

⁷ Mets Yeghern is in Armenian which means Great Tragedy as in 1915 there was not even a word to describe the cruel atrocities of Turks committed against Armenians. Thus, Mets Yeghern was used instead of Genocide.

⁸ Karabakh war between Armenian and Azerbaijan started in 1988 and lasted till 1994. That was a demand in the name of Armenians both in Armenian and Karabakh to unify the latter with motherland Armenia.

Thus, the answer to the question whether the Sumgait atrocities were incentives in terms of remembering the Genocide, is undeniably, yes. It became apparent that both during the Soviet Union and the transitional period the collective memory of the Genocide was present but due to the circumstances the manifestations were different.

In 1991 Armenia got its independence from the Soviet Union. However, it did not realize the Armenians' optimistic expectations. The newly independent state was "... a disturbing mixture of chaos and authoritarianism" (Dudwick quoted in Mason, 2005, p. 59). There was little space for Genocide remembrance due to the economic instability, the poverty that was also a result of the war with Azerbaijan, insecure health system, mass exodus of young people in the search of substance of life. It was not a number one question in Armenia at least until 2000.

Today many scholars think that the collective memory of the Genocide is endangered, that the youth is reluctant to speak, to think, to remember the tragedy of 1915. All the interviewees I met in Yerevan had that apprehension. Hayk Demoyan stated that many youths consider the Genocide an outdated and backward topic. Some connect it with the young people's obvious inclination to be modern and cosmopolitan. I argue that this is possible in Armenian reality. As long as there is the Turkish denial of the Genocide, the memory will continue to cause stinging pain in the hearts of Armenians. I believe that the Turkish denial is the major factor in this regard. The sin leading to the martyrdom of one and a half million Armenians is still denied, the historical injustice is still unanswered. The grief of the lost homeland is still alive.

While working on this topic and collecting data for my thesis I did not have any fear that the collective memory will once be lost. But the story that Mr. Melkonyan told me confirmed my assumptions.

Our family is originally from Mush⁹. At home we have a picture of the fields of Mush. When my daughter started to speak, to understand she asked me what it was in that picture. I answered that it was our fields, our lands; we had been living there, then we had a war with Turks, they slaughtered us and exiled us from our homeland. Once I was about to leave as I had a conference with the Turkish journalists she ran to me and asked where I was going. Then she was already five years old. I said that I was going to meet Turks. She turned to me and said: ‘Dad, will you tell them give our fields back?’ (Yerevan, April 29, 2010).

Considering the Turkish denial of the Armenian Genocide as the main incentive in terms of keeping the collective memory alive, I have dedicated the next chapter to the analysis of the types of denials that have been present in the Turkish reality for decades.

⁹ Mush was a province in Western Armenia, today in Eastern Turkey.

Chapter three - An Overview of the Main Forms of the Turkish Denial of the Armenian Genocide

3.1 *Literal Denial*

Until the present the Turkish government and the majority of Turkish society continues to deny the mass killings as genocide despite the huge amount of evidence.¹⁰ In my analysis of the modalities I will use the theoretical framework developed by Stanley Cohen.

As stated in Cohen's book "State of Denial", the most prominent attempt to hide a record of past atrocities is the Turkish government's endeavors. "The events are documented in Ottoman sources as well as in diplomatic reports at the time, survivor testimonies and later historical research: truths that were certain at the time and the object of international attention were transformed into speculation, rumors and uncertainties. The initial denials entered collective culture in Turkey and slowly became more prevalent outside" (Cohen, 2001, p.134).

According to Cohen there are three types of denial: literal, interpretive and implicatory, which I am going to present later in this chapter and demonstrate those patterns in the Turkish denial of the Armenian Genocide.

Literal denial is "the assertion that something did not happen or is not true". To Cohen the words *literal*, *factual* and *blatant* have the same meaning in this regard, as this type of denial is inclined to disallow the fact or acquaintance of the fact. Claims like "nothing happened here, there was no massacre, they are all lying, we did not notice anything, it could

¹⁰ The Genocide is denied not only by Turks, but by different external agents as well. As Israel W. Charny states, known genocides are denied not only by ideologists but also "by bona fide respectable academicians" (Charny, 2001). For example, a Jewish professor, Bernard Lewis, puts in doubt the fact of the Armenian Genocide claiming that between 1915 and 1918 not only Christian Armenians but also many Muslims died as a result of the weakening of governmental control (Lewis, 1968). The German historian, Lewy Guenter, argues that nationalist Armenians in order to get independence "provoked Turks to commit excesses that would draw the attention of the Christian world and bring about European intervention in Turkey's internal affairs" (Lewy, 2005, 16).

not have happened without us knowing”, are from the list of literal denial (Cohen, 2001, p.7). In the Turkish denial of the Armenian Genocide such statements, i.e. literal denials, are made both by politicians and ordinary people all the time. In the Turkish reality it is often said and I have frequently heard “it was not genocide”, “Armenians are still living in Turkey, how could then be genocide”, “it is just the Armenian propaganda”, “it is the Armenian Diaspora’s myth”, etc.

On November 8, 2009, the Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan while speaking about the visit of the president of Sudan, Omar al – Bashir, and making comments on Gaza and Darfur said “A [genuine] Muslim can not commit genocide”. The logic of such a statement based on religion is hardly interpretable but blatant denial is apparent. This claim was again highly emphasized in his speech made in March, 2010 when he directly pursued the paths of literal denial. That was an angry response to the U.S House Committee on Foreign Affairs¹¹ and to the Swedish government¹² on the passage of the bills about the resolution of the Armenian Genocide. In his speech Mr. Erdogan said:

I should underline that this country’s soldier is bigger [sic] than history and that this country’s history is as clean and clear as the sun. No country’s parliament can tarnish it.

There is no genocide in our civilization. Our civilization is the civilization of love, tolerance and brotherhood (www.azatutyun.am).

On the same occasions the president of Turkey Abdullah Gul made official statements but those were more threatening and doubted the historical knowledge of the parliamentarians who voted in favor of the passage of the bills:

I see this decision¹³, following the political configurations, as injustice to history. After this voting, Turkey does not claim any responsibility for negative results in any sphere.

¹¹ On March 4, 2010, the U.S House Committee on Foreign Affairs passed a bill about the resolution of the Armenian Genocide in spite of the presidential apparatus’s resistance.

¹² Later On March 11, the Sweden Parliament voted in favor of a bill to recognize the 1915 Armenian Genocide. Interestingly enough in both cases the bills were passed by only one vote.

¹³ Abdullah Gul was commenting on the passage of the bill in the U.S. House Committee on Foreign Affairs.

We know very well how such decisions¹⁴ are made. We do not attach special significance to them. If you ask the personal opinions of each who voted in favor, they will not utter even three words.

The leaders of the country have adopted the policy of literal denial from the very beginning of their professional career. This is the official position of today's Turkey, a country that committed the first Genocide of the 20th century.

Here I see the necessity to present the Turkish materials that I studied at the Armenian Genocide Museum Institute. These are the letter of the ministers through which they spread their orders.

This is the official order of Talaat Pasha about the Armenians, written on March 25

The duty of everyone is to effect on the broadest lines possible the realization of the noble project of wiping out of existence the well-known elements who for centuries have been the barrier to the empire's progress in civilization. We must, therefore, take upon ourselves the entire responsibility, pledging ourselves to this action no matter what happens, and always remembering how great is the sacrifice which the Government has made in entering the World War. We must work so that the means used may lead to the desired end. In our dispatch dated February 18th, we announced that the Djemiet has decided to uproot and annihilate the different forces which for centuries have been a hindrance; for this purpose it is forced to resort to very bloody methods. Certainly the contemplation of these methods horrified us, but the Djemiet saw no other way of insuring the stability of its work. Ali Riza [Note: the committee delegate at Aleppo] harshly criticised us and urged that we be merciful; such simplicity is nothing short of stupidity. We will find a place for all those who will not cooperate with us, a place that will wring their delicate heartstrings.

Again let me remind you of the question of property left. This is very important. Watch its distribution with vigilance; always examine the accounts and the use made of the proceeds.

The contradiction between the statements of today's Turkish government and the intention of the Turkish authorities during the World War I is apparent. Yet today even the validity of these documents is doubted in Turkey.

The literal denials do not come exclusively from officials. Those kinds of assertions made by ordinary people are based almost on the same beliefs:

¹⁴ By this the president meant the passage of the bill in the Sweden Parliament.

No such massacre, however, took place, at this or any time during the war. In the face of the great danger which the Empire faced at that time, great care was taken to make certain that the Armenians were treated carefully and compassionately as they were deported, generally to Syria and Palestine when they came from southern Anatolia and to Iraq if they came from the north.

(Foreign Policy Institute quoted in Aghjayan, 1982, p.24).

Literal denial is not a new strategy in Turkey. On October 13, 1984 Necmettin Karaduman, a speaker of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey declared:

I have received a communication from a member of the assembly regarding a resolution pending in the U.S. House of Representatives concerning the so – called Armenian ‘Genocide’. Turkey is a country which has been a symbol of tolerance and throughout history has offered refuge to those fleeing persecution elsewhere. Vilification of Turkey, under the circumstances, is nothing short of astonishing (www.schuchico.edu).

Similarly in September 1994 Turkish Prime Minister Tanzu Ciller made an assertion according to which the whole story is invented and can not be addressed in a way the Armenians desire and thus there can not be talk about reparation:

It is not true that the Turkish authorities are unwilling to state their position on the so – called Armenian issue. Our position is very clear. It is evident today that the Armenian claims are unfounded and illusory in light of historical facts. Armenians were not subjected to genocide in any way. Therefore, Turkey cannot be accused of something which did not happen. For this very simple reason it is also senseless to demand any compensation for such a deliberately created myth (www.scuchico.edu).

The literal denial is orchestrated by well known scholars as well. The Turkish government spends millions of dollars trying to prevent the analysis of the Armenian Genocide, supporting the establishment of “institutes” that would create a genocide- free version of Turkish history¹⁵. They are also engaged in efforts of prevention of the Genocide studies: one of those attempts at silencing scholars of Armenian history was that of Turkish officials’ endeavors to cancel a conference in Tel Aviv in 1982, which was accompanied by the threats to the safety of Jews in Turkey if the “alleged” Armenian Genocide was discussed (Lifton, Markusen, Smith, 1995, p.5).

¹⁵ In 1982 Turkey granted three million dollars for the establishment of the Institute of Turkish Studies in Washington, D.C. (Lifton, Markusen, Smith, 1995, p.5).

A group of renowned researchers – Roger W. Smith, Eric Markusen and Robert Jay Lifton - studied three documents – a letter to Robert Jay Lifton from the Turkish Ambassador to the United States, which included a memorandum to the Ambassador and a draft letter to Lifton for the Ambassador's signature- that revealed Turkey's efforts to engage intellectuals in their denial by funding 'objective' study of the 1915 – 1923 events (Lifton, Markusen, Smith, 1995, p.3-12).

From the content analysis of the materials conducted by the authors of the article, it was obvious that Dr. Heath Lowry, the Executive Director of the Institute of Turkish Studies, who authored the memorandum, was in continuous contact with the Turkish authorities and their 'good' adviser on the denial of the Genocide. In his letter, which was written on behalf of Ambassador Nuzhet Kendemir¹⁶ to send to Dr. Robert Jay Lifton, who had the courage to write a book titled "The Nazi Doctors, Medical Killing and the Psychology of Genocide" (1989), Lowry not only doubted the validity of the Armenian Genocide but also threw discredit upon those scholars who are acknowledged with their researches on the Armenian Genocide.

Your 1986 publication was recently brought to my attention. I was shocked by the references in your book to the so – called "Armenian Genocide", allegedly perpetrated by the Ottoman Turks during the First World War. I was even more disturbed when your citation revealed that your sources consisted of articles and books by three individuals: Vahakn N. Dadrian, Helen Fein and Leo Kuper, none of whom are historians of the period in question (Lowry in Lifton, Markusen, Smith, 1995, p.3-12).

Although the word 'genocide' is used in the letter, yet the expressions "so – called", "allegedly" doubt the fact of the Genocide. In Israel Charny's words the "blatant denials of known events of genocide must be treated as acts of bitter and malevolent psychological

¹⁶ Dr. Heath W. Lowry was tasked to read Robert Jay Lifton's book - "The Nazi Doctors, Medical Killing and the psychology of Genocide" published in 1989 – provide information about the content, check the scholars from references to the Armenian Genocide, "write a memorandum and then prepare a letter for the ambassador's signature". Lowry was the first to be awarded the Atatürk Chair in Turkish Studies at Princeton University. A grant of a 1, 5 million dollars for the establishment of the chair was sponsored by the Republic of Turkey (Smith, Markusen, Lifton, 1995, p.4).

aggression, certainly against the victims, but really against all of human society” (Charny, 2001, p.4).

From my interviews conducted in Istanbul, it became apparent that Turkish society today is inclined to adopt the literal denial as the most reliable and comfortable one.

During my interview, an assistant officer of Foreign Policy Program at the Turkish Economic and Social Studies Foundation Aybars Gorgulu even denied that he or the Turkish society denies the genocide:

I do not think that this is a denial of the Genocide as you call it. First of all in order to deny something you should know it. The government can deny, but I cannot say that the society is denying anything. In Turkey people started to talk about the events of 1915 very lately, in the past couple of years. There is a huge ignorance on the issue in general, that's why you cannot blame anyone of denying something (Istanbul, April 26, 2010).

As Cohen states, literal deniers repudiate to recognize the truth “for whatever reason, in good or bad faith, and whether these claims are true (genuine ignorance), blatantly untrue (deliberate lies) or unconscious defense mechanisms” (Cohen, 2001, p.7). During our conversation Mr. Gorgulu on the one hand implicitly blamed the Turkish government for the public ignorance of the ‘issue’¹⁷, on the other hand expressed supportive assertions in favor of the same government:

There are lots of taboo topics in Turkey and the Armenian issue is only one of them. I do not see this as a denial¹⁸. Turkey has an official history on this issue. That's why the government can deny because if you [the government] accept this you deny your own history. That's why they have this policy.

Then the defensive statements followed:

¹⁷ Mr. Aybars Gorgulu during the whole interview did not call the events of 1915 Genocide. He said that one can publicly name the events Genocide if s/he has already made career like Orhan Pamuk or Taner Akcam. But if one is still at the beginning of the career s/he cannot say that as it will be the end of his/her career.

¹⁸ He mentioned the same sentence several times during the interview “I do not see this as a denial”.

But things are changing in Turkey, I think. After the change in the Article 301¹⁹ people have started to speak more freely. It's a long process of learning and facing history and we are at the very beginning. There is more open debate atmosphere in Turkey right now. Some people say "I recognize the Genocide"²⁰, some people say "I share this tragedy"²¹ and in this regard the critical attitude of the Diaspora [the Armenian Diaspora] is not helpful. There are some positive steps in Turkey. There are some people who are making efforts and this must be appreciated. So Armenians should be patient (Istanbul, April 26, 2010).

My stay in Turkey coincided with the Day of Commemoration of the victims of the Armenian Genocide, April 24. For the first time in the history of modern Turkey there was organized a demonstration by a group of Turkish and Kurdish activists to commemorate the victims of 1915. At first glance it seems that Turkey is really on the way to facing its own history and learning about the past, but if we look at the number of people gathered to give tribute to the victims of the Armenian Genocide and compare it with the whole population of the city [Istanbul], and if we also take into account the fact that on the other side of the square a number of nationalists had gathered with posters and propaganda leaflets and were shouting "betrayers", the Turkish efforts against the Turkish denial are not so promising. The demonstrators "sharing the pain of Armenians" by a rough calculation numbered 2000 and half of them were the Armenians living in Istanbul, while the population of the city according to the latest data is nearly 13 million (www.trueknowledge.com).

¹⁹ 301 Article of the penal code of Turkey makes it a crime to insult Turkey, Turkish nation, and Turkish government. Under the European Union's continuous pressure there were some amendments to it on May 9, 2008. In the amended version, the word Turkishness has been replaced with the phrase Turkish Nation, the maximum penalty has been reduced from three years to two, and the essential change is that the minister of Justice carries the responsibility to give the permission to investigate the offence (Amnesty International, 2005, p.1)

²⁰ On December 15, 2008 in Turkey a group of intellectuals and academics started an online campaign inviting Turks to sign a petition and apologize to "Armenian brothers" for 1915. Although in the petition the word genocide was not used, but many of the signatories called the events of 1915 - 1923 Genocide (www.msnbc.msn.com).

²¹ On April 24, 2010, a group of Turkish and Kurd activists organized a demonstration to commemorate the victims of 1915: they had posters reading "This is our pain. This is a mourning for all of us", "We share this tragedy".

There is no doubt that Turkey will do its utmost to avoid the recognition of mass atrocities committed against Armenians at the beginning of the 20th century as genocide. My interview with Aybars Gorgulu reaffirmed my guess; it is not only politics and public ignorance, there are other factors as well:

Nationalism is very powerful in Turkey. If you ever read the comments in the newspapers.... Huge majority is still against facing history process. One can often read “these are the rubbish of Armenians because we are making our relationships with Azeri brothers” and this is a result of a strong nationalistic ideology in the country.

To my question about where this nationalism comes from and whether Turkey will face its history objectively and acknowledge the Genocide, Mr. Gurgulu answered:

The origins of nationalism are everywhere. Actually if you read schoolbooks, you will see the way the history is written in Turkey: all glorious things for instance the Turks do only good things. And this is a state history, it should be like that²², ok, it should not be but it is the case now.

The republic period is not well written and researched. There are limited studies. There is ignorance in academia as well not only in public.

My interview with a respectful lawyer and writer, Fethiye Chetin (the lawyer of Agos newspaper and Hrant Dink), revealed some sensitive elements of the literal denial of the society:

I was twenty when I heard the story from my grandmother²³. Once she asked me to get in touch with our relatives in the U.S. I was very surprised because as far as I knew my grandmother was my grandfather’s niece and we did not like the fact of having relatives in the States as we did not know anything about the Armenian issue. The society was ignorant as nothing was discussed, taught at school or elsewhere.

I was shocked by the news as a young socialist who had some retaining feelings about nationalism. I was surprised and indignant in those days, I just wanted to run out and shout “we are told lies, they cheat us”. Yet at the same time I noticed that almost everyone had such kind of stories, there is a similar fairy tale almost in every home and people did not know about it. At first I wanted to fight against this injustice – being told lie- but later I realized that it is better to multiply these fairy tales: to conduct conversations with those who have similar stories. It is especially important to tell these stories to young people so that the Turkish society could face its history.

²² Seeing my surprise when I heard this, he changed his sentence.

²³ The story was that during the deportation her grandmother was taken by Turks, forced to apostasy, made Turk and married to her grandfather. For decades her grandmother concealed the fact of being an Armenian.

That's why I decided to write a book about my grandmother's story²⁴ (Istanbul April 26, 2010).

Yet one may ask, as I did, how a citizen of the 21st century can be ignorant of the issues when there are no more boundaries to access to sources of information. From my interviews in Istanbul I got the answer to this question. Many of them blame the government for their own ignorance.

The interview with Altogh Elmaz, editor of the Turkish part of Agos newspaper, supported my initial guess:

Generations have been educated into this imaginary state. This has been the political climate for hundred years – nation state ideology. If I were a person to work on nationalism and teach nationalism, I would take Turkey as an example, of how to construct a nation - state.

But there are so many ways to get information about the rest of the world today, just take the internet. People have other means to collect information and knowledge; it is not only school education. And based on this, I think nationalism in Turkey decreases. But this does not mean that the level of nationalism in the society is decreasing; it might change according to the circumstantial situation. But it is not necessarily about the number of people. Nationalism as an ideology is always ready to come up. There is no correlation between the number of people and the level of nationalism in Turkey (Istanbul, April 24, 2010).

Yet there were people to openly confess and thus confirm the hypothesis that people very often look for scapegoats (although it should be established that the Turkish government is genuinely guilty in this matter) to accuse of their unawareness. This is confirmed by a young student, Burak Demir, who was one of the activists organizing the demonstration²⁵ in Istanbul on April 24, 2010, said:

Many people say “we do not know anything” and they blame the government for that. Yes, I agree today's government was created by those who committed Genocide by killing Armenians, occupying their lands and they do not want people to learn history but there are so many sources where one can get information as I did. So if you want to learn something you can (Istanbul, April 24, 2010).

²⁴ Ms. Fethiye Chetin confessed that at first she did not dare to write the book herself and asked others who were closer to literature to do it. But as she said “no one dared to and I had to write it myself. And finally I decided to write so that I was speaking to someone telling him/her my story. It was very exciting for me. While writing I often read my own words, and cried”. The book is called “My Grandmother: A Memoir” published in 2008.

²⁵ The demonstration was dedicated to the Commemoration of the victims of the Armenian Genocide, which took place in Istanbul, at 19:00 on the 24th of April, 2010.

To show the whimsical cynicism of and obvious contradiction presented in these denials I will present materials from the British documents that I analyzed in the Armenian Genocide Museum Institute (AGMI). Lord Robert Cecil in his speech in the House of Commons in November, 1915 declared:

I think it may be said, without the least fear of exaggeration, that no more horrible crime has been committed in the history of the world.... This is a premeditative crime determined on long ago.... It was a long – considered, deliberate policy to destroy and wipe out of existence the Armenians in Turkey. It was systematically carried out. It was ordered from above... (House of Commons, Hansard (5th Series), Vol. LXXV, 16 November 1915 Cols 1770 -1776).

Studying the archived documents and getting familiar with such denials, a naïve question comes to mind: what was the purpose of Lord Robert to make this speech if not human sympathy and the quest for justice. Were there any hidden thoughts in the minds of those who condemned the brutality of the Ottoman authorities?

3.2 Interpretive Denial

As Stanley Cohen states if “one strategy does not work, the next is tried” (Cohen, 2001, p.103) If literal denial is not workable any more due to indisputable evidence then other techniques are exercised. In Turkish denial all the means are used and the next common one is interpretive denial. According to Cohen’s theory interpretive denial does not reject “the raw facts (something happened); rather they are given a different meaning from what seems apparent to others”. To avoid calling the events by their names ‘interpretive’ deniers assert “this was population exchange, not ethnic cleansing”, “the arms deal was not illegal and was not really an arms deal”, “what happened is not what you think it is, not what it looks like, not what you call it” (Cohen, 2001, p. 7).

The Turkish government continues to claim that the events should not be named genocide before objective scientific research is done, thus going for interpretive denial. Here

are some patterns of interpretive denial from the Turkish reality - “it was a civil strife”, “it was not genocide but relocation”, “the word genocide can not be applied retrospectively”, “what happened does not illustrate the conviction of genocide”, etc (Aghjayan, 1998, p.7 - 15).

Israel Charney calls it “combination of dehumanization” that is “they are not human beings like us and are outside our moral universe of obligation to protect human life – and attribution of dangerous demonic intent and strength provides a powerful basis for an ideology of genocide: they deserve to be and must be eliminated” (Charney, 1999, p. 348). Therefore, the whole scenario went with an encouraging atmosphere of “patriotism” and “duty” (Libaridian, 1985, p.86). According to Gorge Horton’s letter written on February 4, 1915, students at schools were taught a song which said:

“Revenge, revenge, revenge,

Let’s kill and crush,

Let’s drench our knees in blood,

Revenge, revenge, revenge,

Let’s clean the spot from our clothes” (Armenian Genocide Museum –Institute, document no. 271).

Interpretive denial is again present both in the official statements and in the claims of ordinary people. After the passage of the above mentioned bills, the Turkish ambassador to Sweden was called back to Ankara, and on her return she said:

I am disappointed and somewhat surprised because I expected the parliament to adopt the normal position; that is not the job of parliamentarians to decide whether or not a genocide has taken place.

That is the question for historians and for researchers to examine before reaching a conclusion (The Local: Sweden’s news in English).

In her speech the ambassador does not reject that something happened, the claim is that it should be examined by historians and experts of the field. There is no doubt that things have happened but the concern is how to call them.

Among intellectuals the interpretive denial is also a well perceived policy. In this regard, coming back to the letter of the Turkish Ambassador written by Dr. Lowry, it is important to mention that the scholar pursued the well -known Turkish technique that is the claim that the word genocide can not apply to the events of 1915. For this particular kind of denial there are several interpretations made by deniers. One is that in war time many people die but it should not necessarily be called genocide.

It is particularly disturbing to see a major scholar on the Holocaust, a tragedy whose enormity and barbarity must never be forgotten, so careless in his reference to a field outside his area of expertise. For Turks, who are justifiably proud of our long and continuing role as haven for minorities (including the Jews evicted from Spain by the Inquisition), it is particularly disturbing to find our own history distorted in works devoted to the Holocaust of 'World War II' (Lifton, Markusen, Smith, 1995, p.3-12).

Similar denial was seen in the work of Kamuran Gurun "The Armenian File: The Myth of Innocence Exposed" trying to prove that those who are called victims were actually under the governmental support at the time of the events.

The Armenians were forced to emigrate because they had joined the ranks of the enemy. The fact that they were civilians does not change the situation. Those who were killed in Hiroshima and Nagasaki during the Second World War were also civilians. Those who were killed during the First World War in France, Belgium, and Holland were also civilians. Those who died in London during the Battle of Britain were also civilians (Gurun quoted in Aghjayan. 1998, 8).

The forms and claims representing interpretive denial have become quite common in the Turkish reality. Very often the fact of wrong – doings is not rejected but is presented in the light of war time, difficult period, external intervention, etc. In an interview given in 1992 to TV documentary "The Hidden Holocaust" the former Turkish minister of Nationak Defense, H. E. Haluk Bayulken while speaking about the events of 1915 said:

Some of those who were asked to leave the area suffered. There is no doubt about it. In some cases, possible the Turks were being killed so they defended themselves to so both sides suffered from the event. But the allegation that it was a genocide is entirely a big lie of the century (www.scuchico.edu).

My interview with Aybars Gorgulu showed the signs of interpretive denials in the Turkish society as well.

We cannot recognize something that we denied for decades. Many people think that if Turkey recognizes or apologizes for 1915, they will have to pay much compensation. I read a couple of articles on that saying that this can not be the case because the genocide convention can not be applied retrospectively.

Going back to the above mentioned letter written by Dr. Lowry and signed by Ambassador Nuzhet Kendemir, it is a must to indicate that the scholar accused the Armenians of provoking their perpetrators and thus doing harm²⁶:

To compare a tragic civil war (initiated by Armenian nationalists) and the human suffering it wrought on both the Muslim and Christian populations with the horrors of a premeditated attempt to systematically eradicate a peaceable people, is, to anyone familiar with the history in question, simply ludicrous. (Lifton, Markusen, Smith, 1995, p.10).

The next vivid example of the interpretive denial by intellectuals was the advertisement published in The New York Times, Washington Post and several other newspapers in 1985, signed by 69 academics, some of them rather respected and famous in their fields. The purpose of the advertisement was to halt the U.S Congress from adopting a resolution to put aside a Day of Commemoration for the victims of the Armenian Genocide until “all the records of the era had been researched in the archives of the Ottoman government” (Charny, 2001, p. 5). Up to the present days this advertisement is used by Turkish lobbying to prevent the international recognition of the Genocide with a claim that “academic dignitaries” who are in favor of justice and humanity do not recognize the events as genocide. As Israel Charny states “the advertisement in 1985 launched new era of sophistication and camouflage of

²⁶ This is a denial by both an insider (Turkish ambassador) and an outsider (non Turk scholar Lowry) as if the ambassador was against this letter he would never sign it. Perhaps he did not want to spend time on writing a letter about the ‘Armenian issue’.

denials, and began a new era of co-optation of bona fide members of the academic establishment” (Charny, 2001, p. 5). However, it is worthwhile to mention that some time after the advertisement Israel Charny conducted a survey and revealed that many of the signers had regretted taking part of that action. The obscenity of this action became more vivid when the Armenian Assembly of America carried out an investigation of the academic background of the participating academicians and the history of the research grants they had received. The discovery was not surprising: the majority was awarded grants by the Turkish government and a significant number of them were not experts in that field.

Within the frames of interpretive denial there is also playing with the numbers of the victims. Very often it is stated that the numbers presented by the Armenians are forgeries of one’s imagination and that the real number is much smaller than given in the “nationalist” Armenians’ books and publications:

Armenian propagandists claim that as many as 1.5 to 2 million Armenians died as the result of “massacre”. Like the rest of their claims, this also is highly exaggerated, with the number claimed being increased over time. At first, immediately following the war the Armenians claimed that as many as 600 000 had been killed (Foreign Policy Institute quoted in Aghjayan, 1998, p. 15).

In the same report prepared by the Foreign Policy Institute in Ankara one may read:

Out of the some 700 000 Armenians who were transported in this way until early 1917, certainly some lives were lost, as the result both of large scale military and bandit activities then going on in the areas through which they passed, as well as the general insecurity and blood feuds which some tribal forces sought to carry out as the caravans passed through their territories. In addition, the deportations and settlement of the deported Armenians took place at a time when the Empire was suffering from severe shortage of fuel, food, medicine and other supplies as well as large – scale plague and famine (Foreign Policy Institute quoted in Aghjayan, 1998, p. 15).

Another example of interpretive denial made by the Assembly of Turkish American Association affirms the fact of exile yet the perpetrators are equalized with the victims, which implicitly tends to indicate that there were not good and bad people everybody suffered due to the unfavorable circumstances:

It is true, however, that the deportation took place at a time of severe shortage of vehicles, food, fuel, clothing, and other supplies in the entire Empire. Muslims as well as Christians suffered terribly at this time, even in Istanbul and other major cities of the Empire (Assembly of Turkish American Associations quoted in Aghjayan, 1998, p.17).

Similar claims are present in a pamphlet on “Armenian Propaganda” published by a group of Turks, which says:

Muslims as well as non – Muslims also suffered from the ravages of vicious foreign invasions as well as robber bands that sprang up throughout Anatolia due to the weakening of government control. As a result of these conditions, as many as 20% of the deportees some 100. 000 Armenians, may have died between 1915 and 1918, but this was no greater a percentage than that of the Turks and other Muslims who died as a result of the same conditions in the same places at the same time Charny, 2001. p. 10).

The Turkish interpretive denial went so deep into the “game of numbers” that the perpetrators were often presented as victims and the latter as the ones doing harm and committing atrocities:

This amounts to saying that in the course of the events which darken the period under review Armenians lost between 525.000 to 600,000 people and the Turks and other Muslims in Eastern Anatolia lost, say between 2 and 2.5 million (Ozbekhan quoted in Aghjayan, 1998, p. 18).

Within the frames of interpretive denial the most ridiculous one can be nominated the claim made by Justin McCarthy in “Armenian Terrorism: History as Poison and Antidote” that states:

By the end of the Eastern Anatolian wars, 1.2 million Muslims from Eastern Anatolia and the Caucasus had become refugees. More than one million of the Muslims of Eastern Anatolia had died, as had at least 130.000 Caucasian refugee Muslims. 870.000 of the Armenians of the six Vilayets had become refugees or had died. In Anatolia as a whole, 600.000 Armenians and 2.5 million Muslims had died. If this was genocide, it was a strange genocide indeed, one in which many more killers than victims perished (McCarthy quoted in Aghjayan, 1998, p. 18).

The documentaries I studied at Armenian Genocide Museum Institute present just the opposite of the Turkish claims. However, the main difference is that these documents were mostly written by foreigners serving in Turkey at the time of tragedy. The declaration made

on may 23, 1915 by the Government of Great Britain in common with the Government of France and Russia says the following:

For about the last month Kurds and the Turkish population of Armenia have been engaged in massacring Armenians with connivance and often with help of ottoman authorities. Such massacres took place about the middle of April, at Erzerum, Dertchan, Egin, Bitlis, Sassoun, Moush, Zeitun, and in all Cilicia. Inhabitants of about 100 villages near van were all assassinated. In town itself Armenians' quarter is besieged by Kurds. At the same time ottoman government at Constantinople is raging against inoffensive Armenian population. In face of these fresh crimes committed by turkey the allied governments announce publicly to the sublime port that they will hold all the members of the ottoman government, as well as such of their agents as are implicated, personally responsible for Armenian massacres (Doc. F0371/2488/63095. AGMI).

But do morality and conscience ask the number of victims? What is the value of our lives if we will judge a crime according to the numbers of the victims? During the talk with Fethiye Chetin these concerns were addressed:

It is very offensive for me to see inhumane approach to this issue as this is a human tragedy but the discussions and opinions about it are beyond that level. Once a female journalist wrote- "where did you take one and a half million killed. They could reach 300.000 or 350.000 no more", the clarification and the discussion of a human being's life on the basis of numbers are inhumane for me (April 26, 2010, Istanbul).

Lord Robert Cecil, Under – Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs in his speech in House of Commons given on November 16, 1915 said:

I think it may be said, without the least fear of exaggeration, that no more horrible crime has been committed in the history of the world.... this is a premeditative crime determined on long ago.... it was a long-considered, deliberate policy to destroy and wipe out of existence the Armenians in turkey. It was systematically carried out. it was ordered from above...(British documents, House of Commons, Hansard (5th Series), Vol.LXXV, Col. 1770 – 1776, AGMI).

Thus, when there is no space for literal denial the perpetrators do not have a way out but to accept the raw materials. But in this case if the denial is still the adopted policy of a state or society then they go for renaming the events that is interpretive denial. As Cohen defines, "This is a complex and subtle strategy, because the naming of all social events requires interpretation" (Cohen, 2001, p.106).

3.3 Implicatory Denial

Contrary to the documented materials, the claims of scholars who dedicated their professional career to the denial of the well known genocides intend to pass all the boundaries of morality going for implicatory denial, which is “not a refusal to acknowledge reality, but a denial of its significance or implication” (Cohen, 2001, p.8) or taking any responsibility for something that has been done by others or their ancestors. Implicatory denial as a new term coined by Stanley Cohen involves several concepts in it – “justification, rationalization, evasions”. In other words, implicatory denial means being aware of the facts, yet here the point is that what we do with our knowledge (Cohen, 2001, p. 8). One going for implicatory denial may claim “Of course people died. It was a civil war and there were atrocities but not genocide” (Charny, 2000, p. 21).

Within the frames of implicatory denial there are assertions like “it’s got nothing to do with me”, “Why should I take a risk to victimize myself?”, “I’ve got better things to think about”, “What’s the big fuss about”, “So what”, etc (Cohen, 2001, p.8). This strategy is present in the denial of the Armenian Genocide. Very often heard claims are the followings “...the term genocide does not apply to the events named as Armenian Genocide”, “the Armenians’ experience was a civil war within a global war (Charny, 1999, 162), “let’s historians do their job”, “this is a new Turkey and has nothing to do with Young Turks”, “what can we do now”, etc.

Implicatory denials sometimes illustrate human indifference towards the sufferings of others and calling for forgiveness and leaving the past in the past:

These events are not new. Hatred will only bring more bloodshed. Let the people make peace. It happened a long time ago. You can’t bring the dead. People should forgive and forget, so the world can be more peaceful.
This is a practical world. The only sensible thing is to let bygones be bygones and go on with life today (Charny, 2000, p.23).

However, in the Turkish reality there is a type of denial that can not have any other name than just immorality that Israel Charny classifies as illustrative expressions:

The strong always eats the weak. There has always been genocide and there always will be. What happened to the Jews, Armenians, Cambodians, Blacks has happened. That's their place in history. You can't go back there to change it.
The Jews, Armenians, Cambodians Blacks deserve what they got (Charny, 2000, p. 23).

As Israel Charny states that the denial of the genocide means justify the crime, which pave the way for “future violence towards the same people, as well as towards other potential victims” (Charny, 2000, p. 16).

The government of [Turkey/ Germany/ Russia/ Cambodia...] had a right to deal with the problem it had with its disloyal population of [Armenians/ Jews/ Chechens/ opponents to the revolution] and “simply” intended to transfer them to another area where they would not constitute a security threat Charny, 2000, p.23).

Unlike today's supporters of the perpetrators there were opponents of the atrocities, people who noticed the injustice committed against the Armenians on the days of the tragedy. In his report the German Ambassador addressed to the Reich Chancellor Behtmann – Hollweg on June 17, 1915 he criticized the Turkish authorities' cruel actions against Armenians stating that the deportations of the people from eastern Anatolia did not bear just military necessity and quoted Talaat bey's words to doctor Mortsman:

The Sublime port intends to make use of the world war for cleaning the whole country from internal enemies, the local Christians, so that foreign countries won't hinder doing it by their diplomatic interference. This measure will serve to the interests of all allies of Turkey, especially the Germans and so the latter will be able to consolidate.

(Politisches Archiv des Auswartigen Amts des Kaiserlichen Deutschlands (Politarchiv). A-19743, ia Turkei 183. nr. 7122, r 14086).

The documents that I analyzed in the Armenian Genocide Museum institute are not only records of the officials and their letters but also the newspapers of the time that reported the events of 1915. On September 27, 1915 “The Independent” published an article titled “The Depopulation of Armenia”. Presenting the horrors through which Armenians were forced to pass the author of the article referring to the “reliable sources” from Turkey wrote:

.....this is not a matter of local disorder or petty oppression but a systematic effort to extirpate the Armenian race. Thousands of families have been driven from their homes to starve upon the roads. Towns and villages have been divested of their inhabitants. Many are being put to torture to force them to renounce their Christian faith. Women are interned in the harems and children are sold as slaves (Armenian Genocide Museum Institute)²⁷.

In spite of the numerous documented materials available at AGMI as well as the National Archives in Washington, and much other verification existing all around the world the Turkish denial is still stubborn. The claim to leave the issue historians and conduct an objective analysis by looking up in Turkish archives as well is just a new way of escaping the process of facing history. It has been proved that the Turkish archives that were closed till 1960s are partially destroyed. The ones that were saved by the American, German and other foreign witnesses and missionaries are denied by the Turks as being forgeries.

As Israel Charny has noticed the denial of the past is not only disgracing the victims, their successors by creating “a psychological victimization”, but also pave the way for the wrong doers to commit new massacres and genocides on the same people or on others. Thus, whatever the reason of the denial is, the upshot is the same: the present is fake, history is built on sand and the future of justice is endangered.

²⁷ The material is available also on AGMI's web site – www.genocide-museum.am

Conclusion

Difficult past is essential and must be analyzed properly. It can not be forgotten or left behind, it must not be denied. The collective memory of the Armenian Genocide is vital in this sense. It was exposed to thorny experiences; it was often suggested that it should be forgotten. Yet it is alive in spite of the fact that it had to experience the totalitarian regime of the Soviet Union, to pass through generations who were subjected to foreign culture and the continuous allegations that they should live in the present and think of the future.

In this work I have analyzed the importance of the memory of the past and factors that keep it alive. My examinations have showed that the nation's past is crucial for the evaluation of the present and achievement of future goals. It shapes national identity and defines the present status. Looking back is extremely important in terms of preventing possible tragedies in the future not only for the nation that experienced the Genocide but for others as well. The Armenian Genocide could have been a good lesson for many people if it had been addressed properly in its time. If the memory of the Armenian Genocide had been alive not only among Armenians, then perhaps some of the atrocities of the 20th century could have been prevented. It is highly strengthened by Adolf Hitler's widely quoted remark: "Who, after all, speaks today of the annihilation of the Armenians" (Dadrian, 2003, p.408). The Holocaust, Rwandan, Cambodian, and other massacres of the century might not have happened if the Armenian Genocide had been responded appropriately. Thus, the memory of the difficult past is not important only for those who experienced it or those who were guilty of it but for outsiders as well.

In my thesis I have researched the factors that were influential in terms of remembering the past and keeping it alive. Some of my initial hypotheses were falsified and some of them were true. Firstly, I assumed that the Turkish denial of the Armenian Genocide for 95 years has been an essential factor to keep the memory of the Genocide alive. Both the interviews I

conducted in Istanbul and in Yerevan and the literature I analyzed proved that it is one of the key factors if not the most important. The denial of wrongdoings by those who are guilty of it makes the sufferers remember and fight for restoring justice. The memory could not have been so strong if the perpetrators had apologized for that. The denial of the Genocide on behalf of the wrongdoers strengthens the pain and offence.

Secondly, I hypothesized that Armenians' sufferings during the Karabakh movement and particularly the massacres in the Azerbaijani city Sumgait reminded them of their recent past. My research verified that it was vital as the methods used in both cases were almost the same. Moreover, the Armenians saw Azerbaijanis and Turks as the same nation – 'big and little brothers'. In both cases the perpetrators saw the victims as 'gavurs'. And in both cases the international community was present; during the Genocide of 1915 the Young Turks killed one and a half million Armenians in the presence of foreign officials, ambassadors, consuls. Several decades later the Azeri Turks tortured, killed and burned in fires unarmed and peaceful population of Sumgait in the presence of the Soviet Army.

Thirdly, I examined whether the communication of the Armenians living in present day Armenia and the Diaspora had a significant role in the remembrance of the past. The probe showed that it can not be a crucial factor, as in both communities the memory was alive any way. The difference between Armenians inside and outside the country is the political, cultural atmosphere that allowed or for some time even pressed the manifestation of their past.

It was a part of my analysis to check whether the transition from the authoritarian regime into an independent state had an effect or not. Yet it was obvious that being released of communism would give the Armenians the freedom to speak, think and evaluate their past which was suppressed during the Soviet Union. However, it should be established that the

first years of independent Armenia were accompanied by economic crises leaving little space for addressing the past and demanding recognition.

My analysis may serve as the basis for further studying of the collective memory of victimized people as the Armenian case is unique in several aspects: firstly, almost a hundred years have passed since the great tragedy of the nation and the collective memory is alive in spite of the fact that it has passed through Soviet authoritarian regime. Secondly, due to the fatal historical events the Armenian nation is divided into two parts and most of the Armenians now live abroad, yet the collective memory of the Genocide is present in all communities.

My research could have been more comparative – studying the Armenians living in homeland, in Turkey and in other big communities (for instance in Russia where the population is more than one million officially and more than two million unofficially, and in the United States with the Armenian population of half a million according to official data and one million as reported unofficially) if I had more time and resources. However, this research has explored the significant aspects of the collective memory of the Armenian Genocide and thus has brought its contribution to social sciences, particularly the field of transitional justice.

References List

- Aghjayan, George M.. 1998. *Genocide Denial: Denialist Rhetoric Compared: The Armenian Genocide and the Holocaust*. Holocaust and Genocide Studies (accessed: 05/04/2010)
- Akcam, Tanier, 2007. *A Shameful Act: The Armenian Genocide and the Question of Turkish Responsibility*. Constable, London
- Astorian, Stephan, 1990. *The Armenian Genocide: An Interpretation*. The History Teacher, Vol.23, No.2 (accessed: 02/04/2010)
- Balakian, Peter. 2003. *The Burning Tigris: The Armenian Genocide and America's Response*. London, Pimlico
- Charny, Israel W., 1999. *Encyclopedia of Genocide*. Santa Barbara, California Vol. 1, Vol. 2
- Charny, Israel W., 2000. *Innocent Denials of Known Genocides: A Further Contribution to a Psychology of Denial of Genocide*. Human Rights Review, Springer Netherlands
- Charny, Israel W., 2001, *The Psychological Satisfaction of Denials of the Holocaust or Other Genocides by Non- Extremists or Bigots, and Even by Known Scholars*. A Journal of Social Issues, Vol.6, No.1 (accessed: 19/03/2010)
- Charny, Israel W., 2003. *A Classification of Denials of the Holocaust and Other Genocides*. Journal of Genocide Research
- Cohen, Stanley, 2001. *States of Denial: Knowing about Atrocities and Sufferings*. Polity Press
- Croissant, Michael P.,1998. *The Armenia – Azerbaijan Conflict: Causes and Implications*. Westport, Connecticut London
- Dadrian, Vahakn N., 1995, *The History of the Armenian Genocide: Ethnic Conflicts from the Balkans to Anatolia to the Caucasus*. Providence, RI : Berghahn Books
- Demoyan, Hayk. 2003. *Karabakh Drama: Hidden Acts*. Yerevan
- Dominick LaCapra, 1998. *History and Memory after Auschwitz*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press

- Dudwick, N.. *Political Transformation in Post – Communist Armenia: Images and Realities*. In K. Dawisha and B. Parrott (eds.) *Conflict, Cleavage and Change in Central Asia and the Caucasus* Cambridge University Press , 1997
- Figs, Orlando, 2007. *The Whisperers: Privet Life in Stalin’s Russia*. New York: Metropolitan Books
- Florence, Mazian, 1990. *Why Genocide? The Armenian and Jewish Experience in Perspective*. Ames, Iowa State University Press
- Forsberg, Tuomas, 2003. *The Philosophy and practice of dealing with the Past*.
- Hovhannisian, Richard, 1971. *The Republic of Armenia*, Vol.1. University of California Press (Berkeley and Los Angeles, California)
- Hovhannisian, Richard, 1991. *The Armenian Genocide in Perspective*. New Brunswick, Transaction Publishers
- Hovhannisian, Richard, 2007. *The Armenian Genocide Cultural and Ethical Legacies*: New Brunswick, N.J: Transaction Publishers
- Jones, Adam, 2004. *Gendercide and Genocide*. Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press
- Lemkin, Raphael, 1944. *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe: Laws of Occupation – Analysis of Government – Proposals for Redress*. Washington D.C.: Carnegie endowment for International Peace
- Libardian, Gerard, 1985. *A Crime of Silence: The Armenian Genocide*. London, Zed Books
- Margalit, Avishai. 2002. *The Ethics of Memory*. Harvard University Press
- Marutyan, Harutyun, 2009. *Iconography of Armenian Identity: The Memory of Genocide and the Karabagh Movement*. Yerevan, “Gitutyun” Publishing House of NAS RA
- Marutyan, Harutyun. 2008. *Memory of Genocide as a Factor. Current Situation and Possible Developments*. Yerevan

- Mason, John W., 2005. *Living in the Lie: The Armenian Intelligentsia in the Soviet Union*, Oral History Society, Vol. 33, No. 2
- Melson, Robert, 1992. *Revolution and Genocide: On the Origins of the Armenian Genocide and the Holocaust*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press
- Miller, Donald .E, 1999. *Remembrance and Denial: The Case of the Armenian Genocide*. Ed. Hovhannisian, Richard, New Brunswick
- Miller, Donald E. and Miller, Lorna Touryan, 1999. *Survivors: The Oral History of the Armenian Genocide*. University of California Press
- Miller, Donald E. and Touryan Miller, Lorna, 1982. *Armenian Survivors: A Typological Analysis of Victims Response*. Oxford University Press
- Minow, Martha, 2002. *Breaking the Cycles of Hatred: Memory, Law, and Repair*, ed. Nancy I. Rosenblum, Princeton University Press
- Papazian, Michael. “*Philosophy and the Age of Genocide: Reflection on the Armenian Genocide*” in *The Armenian Genocide*, ed. Hovhannisian, Richard, New Brunswick, New Jersey. 2008
- Perroomian, Rubina, 2008. *And Those Who Continued Living in Turkey after 1915: The Metamorphosis of the Post – Genocide Armenian Identity as Reflected in Artistic Literature*. Yerevan, Armenian Genocide Museum – Institute
- Sarafian, Ara, 1993. *United States: Official Documents on the Armenian Genocide*. Watertown, Armenian Review
- Smith, Roger W.; Markusen, Eric; Lifton, Robert Jay, 1995. *Professional Ethics and the Denial of Armenian Genocide*. Holocaust and Genocide Studies, Vol.9, No.1 (accessed: April 4,2010)
- Young, James E., 1993. *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meanings*. New Haven, C.T.: Yale University Press

Web Pages

Agos – Weekly Newspaper <http://www.agos.com.tr/eng/> (accessed April 9, 2010)

Armenian National Community of America

Azatutyun Radio station- <http://www.azatutyun.am/section/english/666.html> (accessed April 25, 2010)

<http://www.anca.org/ancaprofile.php>

<http://www.genocide-museum.am/eng/index.php> (accessed April 10, 2010)

The Armenian Genocide Museum – Institute, National Academy of Science of The Republic of Armenia

www.csuchico.edu California State University (accessed April 10, 2010)

Appendix

List of interviewees

Last name	First name	Position	Date of interview	Place of interview
Seropyan	Sargis	The editor of the Armenism of the Agos newspaper	April 26, 2010	Istanbul
Chetin	Fethiye	Lawyer of the Agos newspaper	April, 26, 2010	Istanbul
Elmaz	Altogh	Editor of the Turkish part of the Agos newspaper	April 24, 2010	Istanbul
Demir	Burak	A university student, a member of Osil Revolutionary Socialist Workers' Party	April 24, 2010	Istanbul
Estugian	Bagrad	Editor of the Armenian part of the Agos newspaper	April 25, 2010	Istanbul

Marutyan	Harutyun	Leading Researcher of Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography, National Academy of Sciences of Armenia	April 28, 2010	Yerevan
Demoyan	Hayk	Director of the Armenian Genocide Museum – Institute, historian, Historian	April 30, 2010	Yerevan
Safrastyan	Ruben	Director of Oriental Studies, Armenian National Academy of Science, Prof. at Yerevan State University	April 29, 2010	Yerevan
Melkonyan	Ruben	Deputy Dean of Oriental Studies Department, Turkologist, Prof. at Yerevan State University	April 30, 2010	Yerevan