

Prospects for Reconciliation: Theory and Practice

Proceedings of the International Workshop, Yerevan, 27 November 2010

Published by:

Institut für Internationale Zusammenarbeit des Deutschen Volkshochschul-Verbandes (*dvv international*)

Proof-reading: Richard Giragosian

Design & Layout: Haroutiun Samuelian

Cover photo: Sergey Parajanov, Three-dimensional collage "Irisen" (1986) © Parajanov Museum Yerevan

Print: Printinfo JS LLC

Opinions expressed in the authors' papers do not necessarily reflect those of the publishers and editors. This publication, in whole or in part, may be reproduced provided the source is duly cited. The publisher asks to be furnished with the copies of any such reproductions.

This publication is not for sale and is not intended for commercial use or profit.

dvv international

Obere Wilhelmstraße 32-53225 Bonn

Federal Republic of Germany

Tel: +49/228-975 69-0

Fax: +49/228-975 69-55

info@dvv-international.de

www.dvv-international.de

For further information please also see

www.speakingtooneanother.org

ISBN 978 - 3 - 942755 - 01 - 6

© 2011 *dvv international*

Prospects for Reconciliation: Theory and Practice

Proceedings of the International Workshop, Yerevan, 27 November 2010

Edited by Hranush Kharatyan-Araqelyan and Leyla Neyzi

Harutyun Marutyan

Can Collective Memory of Genocide Lead to Reconciliation? A View from Yerevan¹

Mourning the past makes sense only insofar,
as it prepares and allows us to ameliorate the future.

(Barkan, Karn 2006: 25-26)

Dr. Harutyun Marutyan is a Leading Research Fellow at the Department of Contemporary Anthropological Studies in the Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography, National Academy of Sciences of Armenia, and Visiting Professor of Anthropology at Yerevan State University. Born in 1956, he was educated at Yerevan State University (History Department, M.A., 1978) and the Institute of Ethnography, Academy of Sciences of the USSR, in Moscow (Ph.D., 1984). He received his Doctor of Sciences (History) in 2007 at the Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography in Yerevan. He has been the recipient of IREX/RSEP (1998), Fulbright (2003-2004) and USHMM-CAHS (2009-2010) fellowships. His research interests include national identity transformation, Armenian collective memory, modern national movements, iconography, traditional Armenian culture, and poverty. Harutyun Marutyan is the author of three monographs: *The Interior of Armenian Folk Dwellings* (second half of the 19th—beginning of the 20th century) (Yerevan, 1989, in Russian); *The Role of Memory in the Structure of Identity: Questions of Theory* (Yerevan, 2006, in Armenian), *Iconography of Armenian Identity. Volume I: The Memory of Genocide and the Karabagh Movement* (Yerevan, 2009, two separate volumes in Arm. and Engl.) and more than a hundred scholarly articles. He has contributed to collective monographs: *Armenian Folk Arts, Culture, and Identity* (Eds. L. Abrahamian, N. Sweezy, Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2001); *Stories on Poverty* (Ed. Hranush Kharatyan, Yerevan, 2001, in Armenian); *Stories on Poverty: Book Two* (Eds. Hranush Kharatyan and Harutyun Marutyan, Yerevan, 2007, in Armenian).

How does a state 'silence' history, and how does this influence the ways of recollection of the past?

As a result of massacres and genocide in the Ottoman Empire during 1894-1923, almost two million Armenians were murdered and Western Armenia was cleared of Armenians. The newly-created Armenian state was to occupy only one-tenth of its historical homeland. Along with heavy losses of human life and territory, Armenians suffered the loss of invaluable cultural assets, and were scattered throughout the world. The tragedy they lived through left a lasting imprint on the psychology of Armenians, and resulted in the formation of a new, powerful layer of collective and historical memory, one with a deep emotional quality and long-lasting effect.

After the establishment of Soviet rule in Armenia on December 2, 1920, talks about Genocide gradually died down and discussion of Turkish-Armenian antagonism was not encouraged.² In general, anything national began to be seen as negative and unacceptable. Nevertheless, in the revolutionary euphoria of socialism-building, the voices of "forgotten" past gradually started to be heard again. The national tragedy first appeared in Soviet Armenian literature in the form of literary descriptions of childhood reminiscences. Writers who survived

1 The choice of the title was conditioned not only by the content of this narration. It is an attempt to respond to an article with a similar title published a few years ago, by a participant of this conference, Professor Elazar Barkan (Barkan 2008: 389-408). The structure of my narration is conditioned by the theses proposed in the conference program. The answer to the question put forward in the title of this article will evolve in the course of the narration, through exploration, statements and highlights.

2 As early as August-September 1920, the Soviet government provided assistance in gold and armaments to the Kemalist movement gaining strength in Turkey, which was followed by an attack that caused the fall of the first Republic of Armenia (May 28, 1918–December 2, 1920). On March 16, 1921, a treaty was signed between Soviet Russia and Kemalist Turkey, of "Friendship and Fraternity." Turkey was seen as progressive and a friendly country of the USSR. In those circumstances, any anti-Turkish manifestations were perceived as anti-state activities.

the atrocities of genocide, and lost their motherland, recalled their childhood years and places dear to them, without actually speaking about the fact of genocide. Specialists described the period between 1920 and 1930s as time when memories were orientated to artistic reflection on the national tragedy and history.

After the Great Patriotic War (1941-1945),³ there were periods when the memory of the national tragedy seemed to die down, only to be revived at an appropriate moment. It found expression in a variety of ways. Thus, the rapid expansion of the national theme in the Soviet Armenian literature of the 1960s did not start from nothing (for more details, see Khachatryan 2006). Yet it had a completely new, higher quality, due to the 'thaw' of the Khrushchev period. It found expression in a number of highly artistic works. Perhaps it was due to the internal political changes, as well as a certain liberal approach toward the issue of the Genocide, brought about by literature, that in April 1965, on the 50th anniversary of the Genocide, mass demonstrations occurred in Yerevan, something that was unheard of in the Soviet state of those days (for more details, see Harutyunyan 2005; Arakelyan 1996). These demonstrations, along with the rapid growth of interest in the theme of Genocide in arts and literature before and after, came to prove that the memory of the Genocide persisted in people's minds and hearts, despite the official policy of ignorance. In those memories, though, Armenians were seen solely as martyrs who had lost their land and were in need of compassion. Although the perception of the writers went beyond childhood reminiscences and episodes of armed struggle, and presented a wider political panorama and range of cause and consequences; nevertheless, the free circulation of the themes of the national liberation struggle, partisan heroes (*fedayees*)⁴ and independence remained under an undeclared ban from an ideological point of view (for more details, see: Eghiazaryan 1990: 36-47; cf. Kaputikyan 1997: 173).

The mainstream Genocide narrative in the literature of that period is embodied in the behest of "peaceful revenge" in Silva Kaputikyan's *Midway Contemplations*. Kaputikyan's appeal (Kaputikyan 1961: 112),⁵ "You must take revenge by continuing to live," can actually be interpreted as a literary formulation of the official policy on Genocide memory (On discussion of this problem see: Ter-Minasyan 2001: 180-185).

3 The Great Patriotic War (June 22, 1941–May 9, 1945) refers to a part of World War II (1939-1945), or more specifically, to the war of the Soviet peoples against Fascist Germany and its European Allies. The name "Great Patriotic War" started to be used in the Soviet reality after Stalin's radio appeal to the Soviet people on July 3, 1941. Outside the Soviet Union, the formulation, the "Eastern Front" was used as an equivalent.

4 The Armenian *fedayee* movement was a form of national-liberation armed struggle by Western Armenians against Turkish tyranny. It was created in the second half of the 1880s. In its initial stage it did not pursue any precise political aims. Its objective was to defend the Armenian population against the persecutions of the Turkish oppressors, and to take revenge on the villainy and cruelty to the Western Armenian working people. From the beginning of the 1890s, the *fedayee* movement gained momentum due to the formation of Armenian national political parties and the creation of their organizations in Western Armenia. The *fedayees* were especially active in battles for self-defense during the massacres of 1894-96. After the 1904 uprising in Sasun the *fedayee* movement declined. At the beginning of World War I, a considerable part of *fedayees* joined the Armenian volunteer detachments, and in the days of the Genocide took part in the battles for self-defense. The people glorified the courage and self-sacrifice of the *fedayees*, their willingness to fight in most unfavorable conditions, and wrote songs in praise of them.

5 The author practically does not dwell on the theme of massacres. The Genocide is not the object of her contemplations, but rather a starting point for them. She is more interested in the path her nation chooses to follow, in particular, as regards to the attitude to the obscure pages of its history. See: Eghiazaryan 1990: 43-44.

Not surprisingly April 24,⁶ 1965, the day of nation-wide commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the Genocide, was called a "national renaissance." That day mass demonstrations of about one hundred thousand people included only a few posters calling for a fair solution to the Armenian Cause. One of the posters read: "Compensate [for] Our Lands," another, with Mount Ararat on the background, read: "Give a Just Solution to the Armenian Cause" (Armen 1991).

Thanks to the joint efforts of the Communist Party leaders and intellectuals of Armenia, resolutions of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) and the Armenian Communist Party's Central Committee were adopted in 1964-1965 to build a "Memorial for the Armenian martyrs fallen in World War I." Yakov Zarubian, the leader of the Communist Party of Armenia, in his letter to the Central Committee of the CPSU, brought up the anniversary of the Genocide, motivated by a universally acceptable Soviet thesis that "a similar tragedy was never to be allowed in the history of any people" (Harutyunyan 2005: 11, 30-36, 40, 48, 64). It is important to note that at the beginning of the 1960s, the construction of memorials to the victory of the Great Patriotic War, such as the "Memorial to the Heroes of Stalingrad" (1963-1967) in Volgograd, the "Monument to the Unknown Soldier" in Red Square in Moscow (1965-1967), and others, had already started in the Soviet Union. This meant that the building of a memorial to the martyrs of the Armenian genocide was part of the broader natural context of monuments of a commemorative nature (cf.: Konradova and Ryleeva 2004: 138-139).

Between 1965 and 1967, on the slope of the picturesque Tsitsernakaberd hill in Yerevan, conveniently far from the center of town, a fact not to be overlooked, the memorial complex was erected in a rather short time (Opening 1967; Harutyunyan 2006). Therefore, on April 24, 1968, the people filled not the central squares and streets of the capital, but marched in well-organized columns, toward its periphery, in order to lay flowers at the Monument to the victims of the Genocide. Thus, in succeeding years, the mass demonstrations of April 24, 1965 were to be transformed into unofficially sanctioned marches of mourners. Starting from the mid-1970s, the processions were actually led by senior officials from the government and the Communist Party leadership of Armenia (Memorial 1975: 79-80), who were the first to lay wreaths at the Monument early in the morning, thus (and with a Moment of Silence), giving official sanction to the Commemoration Day. The marches were accompanied by wreaths decorated with black ribbons with standard wording like: "To the Genocide Victims + the name of the organization", as well as by recitations: certain participants of the procession would recite verses and poems either of patriotic nature or directly related to the theme of the Genocide.

6 "April 24" is traditionally the Commemoration Day of the victims of the Armenian Genocide. On that day in 1915 the Turkish authorities in Constantinople, the capital of the Ottoman Empire, arrested and exiled the first groups of Armenian intellectuals. As Commemoration Day, it was first observed in 1919. More widely (at the suggestion of writer Vrtanes Papazian) it was first honored in 1920, when, by the order of Catholicos of all Armenians, a requiem mass was served in all the Armenian churches. April 24 was honored as Commemoration Day in Armenian communities of the Diaspora, while in Soviet Armenia it was first officially honored in 1965. On November 22, 1988, a law was passed by the Supreme Soviet of the Armenian SSR, declaring April 24 as Commemoration Day of the victims of the Genocide, and a non-working day.

■ Above, I have partly answered the question about how silence, fear and ignorance may influence a conflict resolution discourse. The memory of the Armenian Genocide in general, before the 1988 events, can be described conditionally as 'dormant', when it was mainly expressed as simple remembrance of the past, mourning or similar actions. The situation started to change right from the first weeks of Karabagh Movement (February 1988 – August 1990). In response to self-determination of Armenians in Mountainous Karabagh (February 20, 1988) there was an attack of armed mob of 8,000 on February 22 from the bordering Azerbaijani-populated town of Agdam, followed by Armenian massacres in Sumgait, a town about 25-30 kilometers far from Baku (February 27-29). Sumgait pogroms 'awakened' the dormant Armenian memory of the 1915 Genocide.

In my monograph (Marutyan 2009a), I have shown that events in Azerbaijan were unequivocally perceived as a genocide against Armenians, against part of Armenians, especially given that the violence applied almost replicated the methods used during the Genocide at the end of nineteenth and the beginning of twentieth centuries. The analysis of the available material proves that the struggle for the recognition of the 1915 Genocide, for evaluation of Sumgait massacres as an act of genocide, for the exposure of its organizers and perpetrators and the revelation of the guilty, as well as the verdicts from the trials against them, all combined to gradually lead to the political maturity of the popular masses, to transformation of the stereotypes that had been shaped in the course of centuries and decades, and that led to a processes of re-evaluation of the past and the present. From the point of view of avoiding acts of genocide in the future, there was an understanding for the need for society to hold governing mechanisms and the need for political change in general. Thus, in the years of the Karabagh Movement, the theme of genocide, transgressing the limits of pain and sorrow typical of its initial stage, drove people to activity that resulted in the formation of a new parliament, which was expected to choose the course of radical change (Marutyan 2009a: 274, 276). At the same time, the image of the victim asking for justice and sympathy gave way to that of a fighter who had realized that to achieve a nation's objectives one has to struggle.

That is, the factor of genocide had become the engine that provided the opportunity for the gradual, step-by-step change of old perceptions and stereotypes, for the transformation of an identity based on outdated values, and for the formation of a new identity. In fact, it was the genocide memory that became the means for the Karabagh Movement and, ultimately, allowed for democratic reformation. That is, the factor that is often interpreted as an obstacle to the elimination of the "bondage of the past," and hence, a hindrance to the real progress of Armenians and a "retrograde" means, became the major incentive in Armenia's reality (Marutyan 2009a: 276).

The forms of manifestation of Armenian collective and historical memory are many and diverse. Their elements and components are not set once and forever, but are rather in a process of continuous re-interpretations and re-comprehension. In a time of crisis or revolution, the processes of re-interpretation of the elements of collective and historical memory are accelerated. It is typical that in a critical situation (as were the years of the Karabagh Movement), it is precisely the collective and historical memory of past crises (the Armenian Genocide) that are drawn to the forefront and become a factor

for the persistence and advancement of events. Without disputing this opinion, I still believe that this regularity may be true for any ethnic community—namely, that an adequate use of a most significant element of a people's identity in a time of crisis may become, after certain transformations, a main factor in its progress (Marutyan 2009a: 276-277).

In the 1990s to the first half of 2000s, when Armenian society was no longer in a crisis, the memory typical of a crisis was similarly no longer at the forefront. That memory, remaining a most significant manifestation of national identity, yet at the same time, having become a component of Armenia's foreign policy, was mostly transformed into a tribute of respect, a way of commemoration, and no longer has the same revolutionary, reformative capacity it had in 1988-1990 (Marutyan 2009a: 277-278). Yet the relatively 'dormant' status of this memory could 'awaken,' and be activated due to internal or external provocation, and become an active and once again, decisive factor, just as we witnessed in 2008-2009, in effect of the so-called 'football diplomacy' and the Armenian-Turkish protocols.

■

The statement as to how historical science and the studies of a memory can be included in the process of reconciliation is meant to propose practical solutions. This crucial issue is actively discussed in Western circles of historical science. Theoretical approaches, as well as a variety of practical suggestions as to the solution of the problem are being put forward. Some of them, though mostly incidentally, reflect on the link between the factor of the Armenian Genocide and the issue of Armenian-Turkish reconciliation.

As mentioned above, the "Protocol on Development of Relations between the Republic of Armenia and the Republic of Turkey" was signed in October 2009, where one of the paragraphs suggested the creation of a "sub-commission on the historical dimension to implement a dialogue with the aim to restore mutual confidence between the two nations, including an impartial scientific examination of the historical records and archive to define existing problems and formulate recommendations, in which Armenian, Turkish as well as Swiss and other international experts shall take part." Although consisting of a single sentence, the paragraph contains two theses that suggest methodologically contrary approaches, hence, allowing for contradictory comments. To be specific, the formulation "to implement a dialogue with the aim to restore mutual confidence between the two nations," supposes an approach in line with a TRC (Truth and Reconciliation Commission),⁷ while the formulation "the sub-commission on the historical dimension ... including an impartial scientific examination of the historical records and archive to define existing problems and formulate recommendations, in which Armenian, Turkish as well as Swiss and other international experts shall take part," is more in line with the Historical Commission/Historical Clarification Commission.

What does this mean? The classical TRC approach supposes an *open public* discussion, often in the presence of the perpetrator and the victim (or their descendants); while the "Historical Commission/Historical Clarification Commis-

⁷ There is a significant body of literature on the TRCs and it is not our intention to reflect on the whole specter of issues related to them. Therefore, this article touches upon only a few of the characteristics of these commissions.

sion” supposes an altogether different type of action. Robert Rotberg, president of the World Peace Fund, who is a renowned expert on these issues, states that “historical clarification commissions, a variant of truth commissions, are not common. Although in theory they are constituted and operated differently from truth commissions, in practice the differences to date have been excessively subtle. Clarification commissions review all kinds of evidence – written, oral, legal, forensic (to the extent that bodies may be exhumed) – relating to specific events or a chain of occurrences in the past. On the basis of such a review, a historical clarification exercise can provide a dispassionate, or at least an agreed upon view of the past. *Historical clarification can decide whether there in fact was genocide in Turkey in 1915, and its dimensions* (emphasis is author’s)” (Rotberg 2006: 38). The statement is as clear as can be, and the example refers to the issue of the Armenian Genocide.

Professor Barkan’s approach to the matter is characteristic, and does not significantly differ from that of Robert Rotberg. Thus, on the one hand he recognizes the fact of the Armenian Genocide, yet on the other hand, giving in to the attitude of the Turkish prime minister, i.e. “to leave history to historians,”⁸ he admits that “the Turkish declaration may well be a very good suggestion that ought to be pursued. The claim has the potential of moving the dispute into a relatively professional arena... Both sides ought to engage the historical inquiry and find external professional bodies to sponsor a professional investigation without preconditions” (Barkan 2008: 406-407). Very much the same, but with slightly different accentuation, he states at the opening of his article, “I conclude by discussing the memory of the Armenian Genocide and support a constructive engagement between Armenian and Turkish historians, preferably the formation of a formal historical commission by the two countries. Such collaboration ought to construct a memory that respects the victims, shows empathy for the suffering, rejects denial, points to the responsible individuals and government crimes, but does not indict the Turkish nation—and certainly not today’s Turkish people—for the Genocide” (Barkan 2008: 389-390).

In the next few pages of his article, Robert Rotberg details the functions of the “historical clarification commissions” (Rotberg 2006: 39-40). I will only quote the passages where he speaks about the composition of such commissions, some of their functions, as well as their difference from classic TRCs. Thus, he states that “historical clarification commissions ideally comprise reputed judges, lawyers, or historians, not all of whom need be nationals, accustomed to sifting retrospective evidence, to removing barriers to truth, and to uncovering long-buried facts. These commissions may or may not proceed by taking public testimony...” “Historical clarification commissions can establish chains of culpability, offer support to or refutation of accusations about the perpetuation of atrocities, suggest plausible causality, and single out groups or individuals for criticism. Such commissions can thus provide unimpeachable grounds for apology,”⁹ “Such commissions fail their mission if they offer political or prescriptive reports rather than scrupulously researched reports of times of turmoil. If their opinions are programmatic rather than abundantly factual, they cannot

8 The last such statement was voiced in the interview of Turkish Prime Minister Erdoğan to the “Time” daily in Istanbul, on November 9, 2010 (See “Azg” daily, November 12, 2010), <http://www.azg.am/AM/2010111202>, also <http://www.tert.am/am/news/2010/11/12/ankara/>.

9 It is known that after World War II more than twenty countries had established historical commissions to review their own countries’ behavior during the Holocaust (Bindenagel 2006: 293). Following this logic, it is essential that independent commissions of historians be created in Turkey, in order to study the violence against Armenians committed in the Ottoman Empire at the beginning of the 20th century.

be relied upon to undergird a successful form of apology," "The subtle theoretical differences between an historical clarification commission and a truth commission are implicit in their titles. Historical clarifiers interrogate the ledgers and graves of the past; truth commissioners cross-examine contemporary victims and perpetrators in order to learn what really happened when individuals vanished, or when violent incidents and massacres occurred. ... Historical clarifiers can and do ask some of the same questions, but usually of documents rather than the actual victims and perpetrators. Historical clarifiers more often are attempting to assign blame to a government agency, a military group, or an insurgency unit, not to individuals. Truth commissions work more generally, with individuals. Both forms of post hoc review can provide a detailed, nearly complete, record of past or recent injustice, meticulously documented. Both methods hence can inform the basis of well-grounded apology. Depending on the quality of a commission's research and hearings, and their integrity, such reports provide a morally defensible basis for apology. The reports may also make apologies (and/or prosecutions) imperative."

Professor Rotberg notes that the societies in post-conflict situation prefer the assistance of the TRC type commissions. Since the second half of the 1970s, over thirty states have applied to such commissions (Rotberg 2006: 40). The author believes that "the paradigm for twenty-first century truth commissions (and in many ways for future historical clarification commissions as well) in method, organization, and output is the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), 1995-1999" (Rotberg 2006: 43. See also: Colvin 2003: 153-167; Ignatieff 1997: 169-170; Hellman 2001: 213-214; Wertsch 2002: 46-51; Sanders 2003: 77-98; Christiansö 2003: 372-395).

This commission was mandated by the country's parliament for wide-ranging activities. Previous similar commissions used to offer reports and the same was expected of this one. But the South African TRC preferred absolute transparency, fostering the dissemination of stories about apartheid victims and the facts of violence, also using television to achieve the objective. The media published stories of over 21,000 victims. This commission did not choose the option of theoretically criticizing apartheid, but rather chose the process of accumulating and presenting numerous facts about the sufferers. About 7,000 people appealed to the commission, seeking absolution for their deeds, and only 2,500 were exonerated. The author once again emphasizes that while commissions in Argentina, Chile, Guatemala (and elsewhere) were compelled to act out of the public's sight, the South African TRCs insisted on the *public's participation and the transparency of discussions* (Rotberg 2006: 43-44).

The reconciliation of the conflicting parties is a primary objective of classic TRCs, and is closely associated with apology. Nevertheless, even though the studies of truth commissions are essential for peacemaking, as well as for absolution, the activities of these commissions do not always lead to reconciliation, and in other words, reconciliation is not always their final outcome.

■

Returning to the above-mentioned paragraph of the Armenian-Turkish protocols, we would like to once again state that it reflects two methodologically contradictory approaches. It follows that the Turkish officials are not wrong in see-

ing the clause "the sub-commission on the historical dimension ... including an impartial scientific examination of the historical records and archive to define existing problems and formulate recommendations, in which Armenian, Turkish as well as Swiss and other international experts shall take part" as a typical function of the Historical Commissions/Historical Clarification Commissions, thus, interpreting it as the thesis "leave history to historians." This may be a correct approach in the case of such commissions having been created. As a primary objective of a "Historical Commission," they view the issue of whether or not there has been genocide of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire (exactly as Professor Rotberg interprets). Armenian political figures are justified, when in the formulation "to implement a dialogue with the aim to restore mutual confidence between the two nations," they do not see the necessity for discussions about the fact of the Genocide, but rather interpret it from the aspect of the opening of the Armenian-Turkish border, which is logical, because closed borders do nothing to achieve dialogue.

■

Studying relevant literature on the issue, one gets the impression that today's international public opinion associates the process of reconciliation both inside and outside societies with the above-mentioned Truth and Reconciliation Commissions (and similarly structured units), or with the successful functioning of Historical Commissions/Historical Clarification Commissions. Now, what is the terminology used by these commissions, and what context do they function within? In literature known to us, the terms most often used are: "acknowledgement," "apology," "restitution," (see on this issue Marutyan 2008: 135-155; Marutyan 2009b: 91-106), "reconciliation." I shall briefly dwell on these terms, based on the few works I have had access to.

In works on the issues of reconciliation it is emphasized that the role of historical science in its achievement increases by the day. Thus, Professor Barkan observes that "we used to treat history as an "objective" knowledge of past events that were largely immune from reinterpretation; history was the past, and we could do little about it. ... Increasingly, however, we recognize the growing elasticity of history and that it is anything but fixed. More recently, as history has become increasingly malleable, it has simultaneously become more central to our daily life. It informs our identity more intimately today, and being subject to interpretation, it has also become a space for contesting perspectives. ... History changes who we were, not just who we were. In this sense history has become a crucial field for political struggle" (Barkan 2000: X). In another part of this same monograph, the author observes that the novelty of the urge to amend past injustices is that it addresses history through an effort to build an interpretation of the past that both parties could share (Barkan 2000: XXII).

The study of the historical past (for an attempt at the analysis of the issue in a wider context, see Marutyan 2009a: 27-67) is an essential factor for the analysis of problematic issues both within and between societies. In both instances, the *openness and transparency of dialogues* (underlining is mine – H.M.) between the conflicting parties is viewed as essential (cf.: Barkan, Karn 2006: 8). Only in the course of such a dialogue may new knowledge of the facts of mutual history be available to both parties. New unexpected interpretations may gradually lead to a change of notions and beliefs about each other. It is characteristic, that in his speech to the Turkish parliament, US President Barack

Obama, while emphasizing the importance of taking into consideration the historical past for the improvement of relations between the two countries, called for its being “honest, *open* and constructive” (author’s emphasis) process.¹⁰

As observed by Richard von Weizsäcker, the president of the Federal Republic of Germany, in his speech on the fortieth anniversary of World War II, when referring to the Holocaust, “anyone, who closes his eyes to the past, is blind to the present. Whoever refuses to remember inhumanity is prone to new risks of infection” (quotation according to Marrus 2003: 29). Referring to the past is viewed as a step essential for going forward with resolve and purpose (Barkan, Karn 2006: 26). David Crocker, professor at the University of Maryland in the US, adds yet another accent to the issue: “any society reckoning with past atrocities should aim, I believe, to include *public spaces, debate* (author’s emphasis), and deliberation in its goals, institutions, and strategies” (Crocker 2003: 55).

When a dialogue on the historical past is taking place between the perpetrator and the victim (or their descendants), it usually leads to the *acknowledgement* of the wrongdoing on the part of the former. On the other hand, “acknowledgement is not the same thing as knowledge, because we may know things that we do not acknowledge” (Govier 2003: 70). Acknowledgement becomes an issue when we are aware of unfavorable facts that we do not wish to speak about or to publicly admit. The difference between knowledge and acknowledgement is solely in whether or not the fact is *voiced out or admitted* in some way. As defined by Professor Trudy Govier, “acknowledgement is knowledge accompanied by a *kind of marking or spelling out* or admitting as significantly related to oneself something that is known (author’s emphasis)” (Govier 2003: 82). An unfavorable fact may be overcome through acknowledgement alone. Acknowledgement may be expressed in various ways: through criminal trials, truth commissions, public inquiries, apologies, reparations, or memorials, and this acknowledgement is of tremendous value—most obviously to victims (Govier 2003: 84), and in the case with the Armenians, also to the descendants of both victims and survivors. The author goes on to say that “when there is no acknowledgement of the wrongdoing, the initial wound develops into “the second wound of silence,” because the lack of acknowledgement indicates that people condone the wrongs and do not care about the baneful results” (Govier 2003: 85). Nevertheless, Professor Barkan believes that the growing willingness to recognize past guilt may turn out to be a major innovation in future conflict resolution (Barkan 2000: 322).

Acknowledgement is succeeded by *apologies*: the decades following World War II were marked by apologies on the part of state leaders, as well as by officials of various establishments (banks, the police, professional unions, etc.) for past deeds (especially wrongdoings related to wartime activities) they had been involved in. As experts observe, “the age of apology is distinguished by its unparalleled commitment to remove the past as an obstacle to productive and peaceful intergroup relations. Although they obviously do not erase or undo what has already happened, apologies

10 Quote from statement of President Barack Obama’s speech before the Turkish parliament: “History is often tragic, but unresolved, it can be a heavy weight. Each country must work through its past. And reckoning with the past can help us seize a better future. ... And the best way forward for the Turkish and Armenian people is a process that works through the past in a way that is honest, open and constructive.” Transcript: President Barack Obama, Speech to Turkish Parliament, April 6, 2009. <http://allthatnatters.com/2009/04/06/transcript-president-barack-obama-speech-to-turkish-parliament-april-6/>

can *amend the past* so that it resonates differently in the present for those who feel aggrieved by it or responsible for it" (Barkan, Karn 2006: 8). Julie Fette, a professor at Rice University, notes that "scholars have suggested several reasons for the emergence of apology on a global scale at the end of the twentieth century: a new international focus on morality; a revised understanding of universal human rights, state sovereignty and international law; a willingness of state actors to show feelings of caring and regret and to view apology not as a weakness but a manifestation of strength; ... as well as increased demand for recognition by past victims" (Fette 2006: 259). Through a detailed analysis of the process of apologizing of the French leaders for the wrongdoings of the Vichy regime, the author shows how the process, starting with the upper circles of the state, passes on to the civil society, and becomes a tool in the process of national recovery (Fette 2006: 259-285). Robert Rotberg, too, is positive that a national apology that flows from meaningful investigation and careful research has stronger moral and practical claims (Rotberg 2006: 36). Inside a society, apology becomes an act of *rehabilitation for the perpetrators* and their descendants rather than the victims (Barkan, Karn 2006: 17).

As Professor Bindenagel believes, "apology cannot come without understanding. Understanding history comes from knowing historical facts. Without the truth, history will remain an obstacle to the future" (Bindenagel 2006: 289). Apology, at that, can not by itself be sufficient for those who wish to do away with the past mistakes, especially in order to pave the way for democracy. "Apology is often the result, and always a part of the process of reconciliation, but in itself is no magic potion" (Barkan, Karn 2006: 9). As noted by the same authors, apology does not necessarily require forgiveness (Barkan, Karn 2006: 11). The same, in a wider context, has been emphasized by the dean of Harvard Law School, Professor Martha Minow, who stated that "apologies are most meaningful when accompanied by material reparations; and reparations are most meaningful when accompanied by acknowledgement of their inadequacy in the effort to apologize and make amends... taken together, apologies and reparations offer responses to mass atrocity that demand recognition of wrongs done without obliging survivors to forgive" (Minow 2002: 17-18, 98-99, quoted from Payaslian 2008: 423).

Reconciliation is a long process that is not terminated by the conclusion of war crime trials or truth and reconciliation commissions (Prager 2003: 14), still the process in itself may help prevent a society from lapsing back into violence as a way to resolve conflict (Crocker 2003: 54). As observed by the latter, "if reconciliation in any of its several senses is to take place, there must be some agreement about what happened and why. Former enemies are unlikely to be reconciled if what counts as lies for one side are verities for the other" (Crocker 2003: 45).

Thus, the concepts "dialogue," "acknowledgement," "redemption" and "reconciliation" imply a certain *process*. As far as I have learned from professional literature on the issue, the methodology of classic TRCs is effective for the resolution of issues within a society, while for the initiation of a peace dialogue around issues that are the result of relatively recent (rather than "olden days") interstate conflicts, preference is given to "Historical Commissions." Where the activities of the latter are closed and strictly professional, in the case of TRCs, they are *open, with the active involvement of the public at large*.

■
So then, in what context¹¹ can the memory of the Armenian Genocide lead to reconciliation?¹²

"Turkish-Armenian Reconciliation Commission" (TARC) activities with the involvement of experts have been recorded in the history of Armenian-Turkish relations, and took place in 2001-2004. They were carried out behind closed doors. One of the outcomes of the work of the commission (this was stated by Professor David Hovhannisyan, too, in his presentation in the conference) was the change of the former attitude of the representatives from Turkey to the assessment of violence against Armenians in the Ottoman Empire in the beginning of the 20th century. Another organization, a third party, the International Center for Transitional Justice (ICTJ), offered an expert conclusion qualifying the abovementioned events as "genocide." Have the activities of TARC promoted the process of a 'dialogue' or 'reconciliation' between the two neighboring peoples? There seems to be no evidence of any such assessment. I fully share Professor Simon Payaslian's opinion that "the formation of a truth and reconciliation commission in the Armenian-Turkish case must have *greater transparency* (author's emphasis) and must be representative of the Armenian people. The TARC experience demonstrated that that process lacked a sufficient degree of public legitimacy and, as a result, it could not function as a mediator" (Payaslian 2008: 414). Once again addressing the issue, the author emphasizes anew the importance of transparency in likely discussions around the issue: "a host of questions must be answered before any Armenian-Turkish reconciliation process can be effective. It needs to be determined whether the Armenian-Turkish reconciliation process should be confined to secret or closed door negotiations as it was with TARC, or become *more transparent, based on or operating in an environment of openness and wider participation*¹³ (author's emphasis)" (Payaslian 2008: 424).

Today "Turkey itself neither acknowledges nor could conceive of apologizing for the Armenian genocide" (Rotberg 2006: 33). Quoting Germany's Chancellor Konrad Adenauer's words about the culpability of the German people, said about six decades ago, and followed by the passing of legislative acts on the payment of reparation to the Holocaust victims, Professor Michael Marrus mentions Armenians, "who still await a comparable acknowledgement from the Turkish government of its political responsibility for the genocide attacks upon them by the Turks in 1915" (Marrus 2003: 28). Speaking of persecutions of the truth that were at times accompanied by demands for unacceptable compromises, Carol Prager, professor at the University of Calgary in Canada, brings another vivid example of Turkey's behavior as a state, that still carries on in different manifestations: "an example is Turkey's recent warning to the United States that the passage of a House of Representatives' resolution blaming Turkey for genocide against the Armenians would endanger an agreement allowing the US to use a Turkish airbase in any future crisis involving Iraq" (Prager 2003: 21).

11 Professor Barkan also believes that the memory of the Armenian genocide could lead to reconciliation, but the context where he sees such an opportunity equates discussions of the historical heritage between Armenia and Turkey with processes of democratization. As noted above, he also believes that Armenian and Turkish historians should examine facts of the not remote past, to at least prove the actuality of episodes where there is common consent, as well as to try to elucidate the issues that cause dissent (Barkan 2008: 406-407).

12 I personally give preference to the more realistic, in my opinion, term 'dialogue,' as the notion 'reconciliation' which is to come after 'acknowledgement,' 'apology' and 'redemption,' will take decades to realize. In my opinion, the use of this term in today's reality has an implication of propagation.

13 The author very likely means the inclusion of the Armenians of the diaspora in the discussions of the issue.

This and other numerous facts come to prove that Turkish authorities are still unprepared to start a civilized dialogue. As to contacts on the level of NGOs or expert commissions, even though they may be helpful, they still cannot substitute for a dialogue between peoples which can, in theory, lead to peace only after having gone a certain distance. After all, how is it possible to acknowledge and make acceptable the public opinion of conflicting parties without reshaping animosity? Can the processes of reconciliation proceed along with democratization? It is my opinion that they can.

The abovementioned expert opinions have repeatedly stated the necessity of *openness, of transparency of dialogues, as well as of the inclusion of the public at large in the process*. So then, *what is the way for its realization?* I strongly believe that the clue to it, the keystone of its philosophy is the very first word of the title of the "Truth and Reconciliation Commissions" – "truth". But it is *the truth that the peoples of both parties need to have access to, not only historians and experts of closed door commissions*.

The scheme for its realization, as I see it, is as follows: a historical commission is to *only* define the range of issues of the history of Armenian-Turkish relations (first and foremost of the years of the Armenian Genocide) that are to be *presented to the Armenian and Turkish public via the most watched TV channels, by Armenian and Turkish historians, with the provision of simultaneous translation*. One thing seems to be clear: it is not likely that the historians in these debates will change their professional opinion under the weight of facts and arguments. Yet, in this case *the subject is the watching public, the actual or potential representatives of a civil society, rather than the historians*. It is these people, who will be able to hear the opposite party's views and opinions, and who will draw their own conclusions from the debates of experts. And only if these debates are expert (rather than journalistic or publicizing) and have merit, and if they are organized repeatedly over a long period, and are consistent, the Armenian and Turkish "truths" will become available to the conflicting parties, and will move from television screens into the sphere of active public discussions of a democratic nature. Moreover, along with genocide-related issues, it may be possible to discuss historical problems of the region and issues of Armenian-Turkish cultural interrelations in the course of their mutual history, which may help in getting to know each other better. This process is sure to have positive outcomes: the notions about each other of the people on both sides will certainly change, and this may just pave the way for the starting of a process of actual reconciliation.

References

Arakelyan V. (1996). April 24, 1965. *Hayk*, April 23 (in Armenian).

Armen Mkrtych (1991). Memorandum to the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Armenia. *Grakan tert*, September 6 (in Armenian).

Barkan E. (2008). Can Memory of Genocide Lead to Reconciliation? *The Armenian Genocide: Cultural and Ethical Legacies*, edited by Richard Hovannisian, pp. 389-408. New Brunswick (USA) and London (UK): Transaction Publishers.

Harutyun Marutyan

Barkan E. (2000). *The Guilt of Nations: Restitution and Negotiating Historical Injustices*. New York and London: W.W. Norton and Company.

Barkan E., Karn A. (2006). Group Apology as an Ethical Imperative. *Taking Wrongs Seriously: Apologies and Reconciliation*, edited by Barkan E. and Karn A., pp. 3-30. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press.

Bindenagel J. D. (2006). Justice, Apology, Reconciliation, and the German Foundation: "Remembrance, Responsibility, and the Future." *Taking Wrongs Seriously: Apologies and Reconciliation*, edited by Barkan E. and Karn A., pp. 286-310. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press.

Colvin Christopher J. (2003). 'Brothers and Sisters, Do Not Be Afraid of Me': Trauma, History and the Therapeutic Imagination in the New South Africa. *Contested Pasts: The Politics of Memory*, edited by K. Hodgkin and S. Radstone, pp. 153-167. London and New York: Routledge.

Christiansë Yvette (2003). Passing Away: The Unspeakable (Losses) of Postapartheid South Africa. *Loss: The Politics of Mourning*, edited by David L. Eng and D. Kazanjian, pp. 372-395. Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press.

Crocker David A. (2003). Reckoning with the Past Wrongs: A Normative Framework. *Dilemmas of Reconciliation: Cases and Concepts*, edited by Carol A. L. Prager and T. Govier, pp. 39-63. Waterloo, Ontario (Canada): Wilfrid Laurier University Press.

Eghiazaryan A. (1990). The Reflection of the Genocide in the Soviet Armenian Literature, *Lraber hasarakakan gitutyunneri*, no. 4, pp. 36-47 (in Armenian).

Fette Julie (2006). The Apology Moment: Vichy Memories in 1990s France. *Taking Wrongs Seriously: Apologies and Reconciliation*, edited by Barkan E. and Karn A., pp. 259-285. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press.

Trudy Govier (2003). What Is Acknowledgement and Why Is It Important? *Dilemmas of Reconciliation: Cases and Concepts*, edited by Carol A. L. Prager and Trudy Govier, pp. 65-89. Waterloo, Ontario (Canada): Wilfrid Laurier University Press.

Harutyunyan A. (2005). *Hayots tseghaspanutyan 50-amyake yev Khorhrdayin Hayastane (pastatghteri yev nyuteri zhoghovatsu)* [The 50th Anniversary of the Armenian Genocide and the Soviet Armenia (Collection of Documents and Materials)]. Yerevan: Gitutyun (in Armenian).

Harutyunyan V. (2006). How the Genocide Memorial Design Was Chosen. *Azg*, May 27 (in Armenian).

- Hellman Cecil G. (2001). *Culture, Health, and Illness*. London: Arnold.
- Ignatieff M. (1997). *The Warrior's Honor: Ethnic War and the Modern Conscience*. New York: Metropolitan Books.
- Kaputikyan S. (1961). *Mtorumner chanaparhi kesin* [Thoughts on the Halfway]. Yerevan: Haypethrat (in Armenian).
- Kaputikyan S. (1997). *Ejer pak gzrotsnerits* [Pages from Closed Drawers]. Yerevan: Apollon (in Armenian).
- Khachatryan Y. (2006). Wonderful Decade. *Azg/Azg-Mshakuyt*, September 2 (in Armenian).
- Konradova N. and A. Ryleeva. (2004). Heroes and Victims: Memorials of the Great Patriotic War. *Neprikosnovennyi zapas. Debaty o politike i kulture*, no. 40-41, pp. 134-148 (in Russian).
- Marrus Michael R. (2003). Overview. *Dilemmas of Reconciliation: Cases and Concepts*, edited by Carol A. L. Prager and Trudy Govier, 27-36. Waterloo, Ontario (Canada): Wilfrid Laurier University Press.
- Marutyan H. (2008). German Reparations to Jewry: Formation, Process and Recent Situation. *21st Century: Informational and Analytical Journal*, No. 4, pp. 135-155 (in Armenian).
- Marutyan H. (2009a). *Iconography of Armenian Identity. Vol. 1. The Memory of Genocide and the Karabagh Movement*. Yerevan: Gitutyun.
- Marutyan H. (2009b). German Reparations to Jewry: Formation, Process and Recent Situation. *Arevmtahayutyuan pahanjatirutyuan himnakhndirner* [The Problems of Western Armenian's Claims]: Collection of Conference Papers. Editors: Shahnazaryan A., Marutyan H., compilers Arshakyan A., Vardanyan V., Yerevan, pp. 91-106 (in Armenian).
- Memorial (1975). At the Memorial of the Victims to the Genocide. *Patma-banasirakan handes*, no. 2, pp. 79-80 (in Armenian).
- Minow M. (2002). Breaking the Cycles of Hatred. *Breaking the Cycles of Hatred: Memory, Law, and Repair*, edited by Minow M., pp. 14-76. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Opening (1967). The Opening of the Monument Devoted to the Memory of the Victims of the Genocide. *Sovetakan Hayastan*, November 30 (in Armenian).
- Payaslian S. (2008). Anatomy of Post-Genocide Reconciliation. *The Armenian Genocide: Cultural and Ethical*

Harutyun Marutyan

Legacies, edited by Hovannisian R., 409-428. New Brunswick (USA) and London (UK): Transaction Publishers.
Prager Carol A. L. (2003). Introduction. *Dilemmas of Reconciliation: Cases and Concepts*, edited by Carol A. L. Prager and T. Govier, pp. 1-26. Waterloo, Ontario (Canada): Wilfrid Laurier University Press.

Rotberg R. I. (2006). Apology, Truth Commissions, and Intrastate Conflict. *Taking Wrongs Seriously: Apologies and Reconciliation*, edited by Barkan E. and Karn A., pp. 33-49. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press.

Sanders M. (2003). Ambiguities of Mourning: Law, Custom, and Testimony of Women Before South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission. *Loss: The Politics of Mourning*, edited by David L. Eng and D. Kazanjian, pp. 77-98. Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press.

Ter-Minasyan A. A. (2001). S. Kaputikian's Thoughts Half-way and After. *Lraber hasarakakan gitutyunneri*, no. 1, pp. 175-185 (in Armenian).

Wertch James V. (2002). *Voices of Collective Remembering*. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press.