

**Christine Melkonyan, ARMENIAN QUESTION AND THE ARMENIAN  
DIASPORA BEFORE THE COLLAPSE OF THE USSR, YEREVAN, 2018,  
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The monograph of Ch. Melkonyan, the senior researcher of the Institute of Oriental Studies, NAS RA, sponsored by the Ministry of Diaspora RA, is dedicated to the activities of the Armenian Diaspora in regard to the Armenian Question which had received a strong impetus from the second half of the XX century, especially since 1960s. The monograph covers about half a century, from 1940s until late 1980s, reaching until the collapse of the USSR.

The study consists of four chapters, where the activities of the Diaspora are presented in chronological order.

**Chapter 1** - «The Armenian Question in the context of the Soviet-Turkish relations and the Diaspora (second half of 1940s)». In this chapter the author discusses the interstate and international political processes dealing with the territorial claims of the USSR against Turkey after World War II, and in this context the expectations and hopes of the Diaspora. She mentions that the demand of the USSR to return the regions of Kars and Ardahan (Western Armenia) to Armenia was an important event for the Armenians of Diaspora, who were hopeful that the international community should assist the USSR in the reunification of Armenians worldwide. National councils created in different countries started to perform active efforts with the hope that some parts of historical Armenia are going to be attached to the Soviet Armenia. Armenian national councils were addressing petitions and memorandums to the newly created United Nations, peace conferences of Potsdam, London, Paris, and to governments of different countries. All national councils were acting with enthusiasm which was very important for the consolidation of efforts and establishment of joint position for the solution of Armenian Question. The author notices that the initiation of the Cold War had affected negatively on the process of the solution of Armenian Question which appeared in a dead-alley. Moreover, as a result of the Cold War the Armenian community worldwide was splitted in the geopolitical sense. Armenians of the USSR and those of the Diaspora actually appeared in two confronting camps. It should be stressed that although the USSR was forced to abandon territorial demands to Turkey, anyway, it was extremely important for the activities and efforts of the Diaspora in the future. The author is right when she mentions that the process of the solution of the Armenian Question and the international recognition of the Armenian genocide was exceptionally monopolized by the Diaspora since the Republic of Armenia was not able to carry out a policy different from that of the USSR. So the role of the political and social organizations of the Diaspora and individuals was pivotal.

**Chapter 2** - «50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Armenian genocide and the activities of Diasporan Armenians in 1960s» represents the active role of the organizations and

individuals of the Diaspora in the field of international recognition of the Armenian genocide, which became more efficient from the mid-1960s connected with the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Genocide. The author mentions that during this period the interest of international community was noticeably increased in regard to these problems, in international organizations, scientific and public conferences had started discussions in different formats. It is mentioned that in 1960s the Armenian question was becoming a bargaining chip for the great powers as a means of pressure on Turkey, which unfortunately continued in the subsequent decades. The author views the steps conducted in the field of the international recognition of the Armenian genocide in parallel with the international political processes, also she gives the reflexions of these processes in western and especially in Turkish mass media. Resuming the chapter she states that 1960s had become a turning point in the history of the Armenian genocide, since in Soviet Armenia the problem of genocide ceased to be regarded as a prohibited topic, and the struggle of the Diasporan Armenians for the international recognition of the genocide had become more effective. In response to this, Turkey began to conduct active counter measures, which had laid a base for the Turkish denialism and anti-Armenian propaganda. For example, in 1967 the Turkish Council of National Security had discussed the activities of the Diaspora directed towards the international recognition of the genocide, which resulted in the establishment of the Turkish state-regulated policy.

**Chapter 3 - «Armenian problem and the activities of Diasporan Armenians in 1970s»** discusses the efforts undertaken by the Diasporan Armenians in international organizations and different countries aimed on the recognition of the Armenian genocide. The Diasporan organizations, along with initiating demonstrations and installing monuments commemorating the Genocide, are submitting petitions and appeals to UN, European Parliament, international organizations, leaders of different countries and governments. Due to the activities of the Diaspora the problem of the Armenian genocide had entered the UN. Although in 1970s the debates in the Commission of the Human rights of UN were not fruitless, which was conditioned by political realities, anyway, they had an important impact on the internationalization of Armenian genocide. The problem of Armenian genocide was subject to discussions in different countries, and in political processes, where the organizations and individuals had actively participated, like in France and the USA. In the USA were extremely active the Armenian assembly and Armenian National Committee of America, who took the main burden of the Armenian claims and the Genocide recognition. These structures started to perform active efforts in the executive and legislative bodies of the USA, in the presentation of Armenian genocide in the public and political circles. In 1970s besides the traditional peaceful activities begins the phase of armed struggle. In the monograph are briefly introduced activities of the Armenian Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia and Justice Commandos of the Armenian Genocide, stating that due to their actions they had succeeded to activate once more the problem of the

recognition of the Armenian genocide in international and political agenda. The author also discusses the secret meeting of the representatives of Armenian national parties with Turkish foreign minister I. Caglayangil in Zürich, 1977, where the latter threatened with the possibility of countermeasures. Actually the Turkish special services began actions against the organizations of the Diaspora and individuals, in which the Turkish criminal world and mafia were also involved.

**Chapter 4** - «The process of recognition of Armenian genocide in 1980s». The author notices that in 1980s the efforts of the Diaspora in the field of the solution of Armenian question and the recognition of Armenian genocide has brought to some positive results. These were not only steps directed towards the adoption of resolutions by international organizations and parliaments of some countries, but also in order to voice that question by politicians, scholars of the genocide studies, historians and other people. Along with the traditional means of behavior and struggle other factors had come into presence, which had widened the interest of international community towards the Armenian genocide. In some European countries the organizations of Human rights also began to press on their governments, demanding the recognition of the Armenian genocide. In the monograph are mostly discussed the activities of politicians of France and the USA and the initiatives of their parliaments in regard to the recognition of Armenian genocide, and the resolution of European council accepted in 1987. The author discusses these processes in the frames of international relations and geopolitical developments, and the relations of these countries with Turkey as well. As in the case of France, in that of the USA is clearly demonstrated the continuous conflict between the geopolitical interests and human values (for example, the resolution on the Armenian genocide had not passed in the Congress of the USA under the pressure of the government).

In the monograph is made an attempt to elucidate different aspects of the activities of the Diaspora in regard to the solution of Armenian genocide, which include 1940-1980s. It introduces new archival materials and documents, and also excerpts from the the Diaspora and Turkish mass media. It should be mentioned that the activities of the Armenian Diaspora aimed on the recognition of the Genocide were discussed especially in parallel with the relations of these countries with Turkey, and geopolitical and interstate developments as well.

Taking into account the multilayered and lengthy character of the problem, some observations should be in place. Although the author had mentioned that the monograph was represented as an essay, nevertheless, taking into account its voluminous character, the study of the Armenian genocide without the detailed analysis of attitude and activities of Diasporan political parties and organizations it could not be regarded as complete. It is evident that the competition between Armenian national parties which had a pivotal role in the Diaspora, differences between their approaches and discord had its negative impact also on the Armenian claims, from the point of joint struggle. The monograph actually does not discuss the activities of the Armenian

Catholicosate of the Great House of Cilicia, and also initiatives of such an influential organization as, for example, AGBU. The activities of Armenian scholars living in abroad, efforts of Diasporan scholars in the field of Armenian genocide and genocide studies are also bypassed. The above mentioned is necessary for the completeness of the study which should be done in the future. The monograph under review, even in the form of the essay, is important for the understanding of the main trends and steps in the activities of the Diaspora focused on the solution of the Armenian genocide. Anyway, it lacks reworking in regard to the elucidation of different problems, analysis and coverage.

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Translated from the Armenian by **Aram Kosyan**