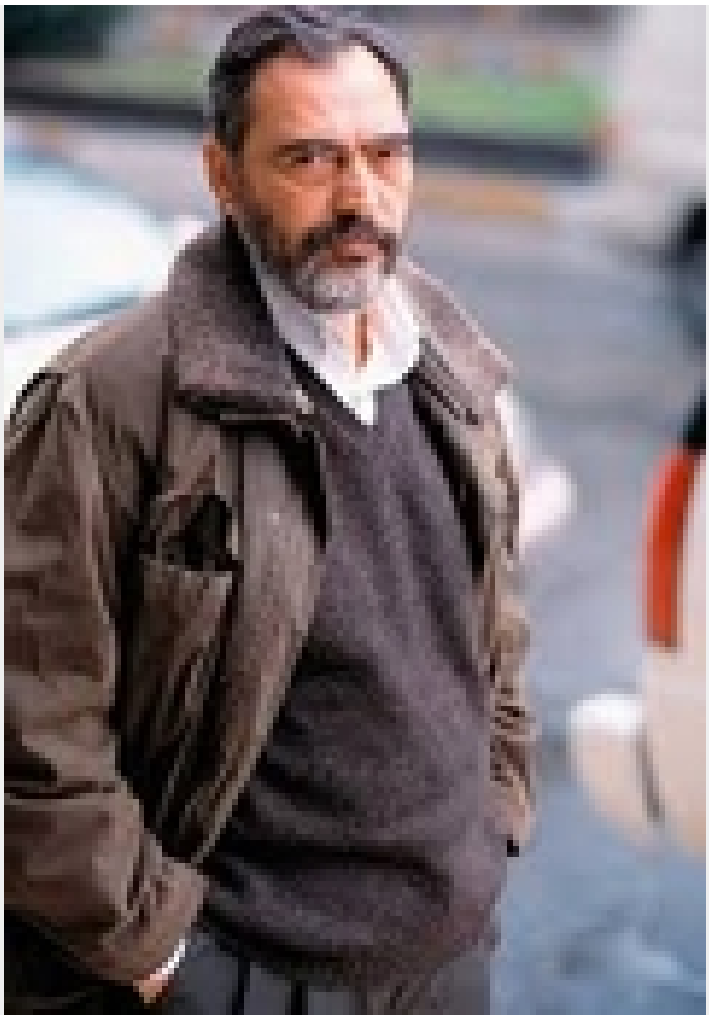
# WHAT DOES TURKEY THINK?

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**Category:** Opinions

**Sevak Artsruni**, Yerevan, 10 May 2015

In response to "Loss of Memory is Not an Argument" article by Dikran Pashabezian (Keghart, April 6, 2015), I would like to share with Keghart readers excerpts from columns by Istanbul-based journalist Etyen Mahcupyan in "Daily Sabah" (April 22 to May 8).

Mahcupyan's thoughts are realistic and to the point. He rightly says that to change Turkey a new psychology is required in that country. The psychology must free the Turkish mind of the "old devils". He says that the Kemalist republic maintained the Unionists' policy almost unchanged. Along with politicians, ideologues, bureaucrats, and businessmen it included Unionists who constituted the backbone of the new Turkish republic.

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Mahcupyan wrote: "All the laws were produced and implemented with the intention of making Armenians incapable of returning to their homeland and forcing them to lose their citizenship and properties. As the defender and protector of the state's official ideology, the judiciary instrumentalized the law to the detriment of minorities… In 1915, Armenians were sent to their deaths in groups as a result of the state's conscious decisions and practices. This was not done with the purpose of eradicating a race or a nation, but rather, it was part of a policy that sought to reduce the Armenian population to less than 5% in every province…Many details have not yet come to light since the archives covering the decisions taken by the Unionist state were burnt, and the remaining documents are mainly in the closed archives of the General Staff. The outcome, in any case, was that the Armenian community of Anatolia practically disappeared."

Mahcupyan, a friend of the late Hrant Dink, was for a short time earlier this year senior adviser to Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu. He believes that after the centennial of the Armenian Genocide, denial of what happened in 1915 is no longer possible in Turkey. However, expecting a complete capitulation of Turkey on the issue is not possible. Turkey will never recognize the genocide as Germans did the Holocaust, because Turkey won the war of independence. Moreover, Turkey and the AKP will always resist the interference of third parties and most particularly those of Western

countries.

Mahcupyan believes the solution to the Armenian/Turkish conflict is built on the following principles:

1. The AKP will always reject dealing with the "genocide" topic exploited by third parties towards Turkey.
2. The AKP supports and will continue to support dialogue and reforms as part of the rehabilitation of Armenians in Turkey.
3. In its battle against Turkish nationalism, the Islamic AKP is ready to reassess the past and demonstrate that those who deported, massacred Armenians and confiscated their properties were from the nationalist secular segment of Turkish society and that religious Muslims helped and protected the Armenians. Religious Muslims were themselves oppressed by the Young Turks and the Kemalist regime and that the AKP, in its quest for a "new Turkey", would be pleased to establish a republic based on more pluralistic values.
4. On its path to this "New Turkey" citizens of Turkey need a new psychology. This new state of mind is not only necessary for dealing with the Armenian issue but is also a factor of change in Turkey's quest for reforms. This new psychology points out the fact that the Armenian taboo was the basis of the Kemalist authoritarian regime. Mahcupyan stipulates that the Kemalist state manipulated the Armenian taboo to produce "reasonable" citizens.
5. Satisfying Armenians' expectations will be possible only when the two societies 'recognize' each other and imagine a future together.

In his May 8th article Mahcupyan tried to analyze the psychology of Armenians who inherited the traumas of the direct victims of 1915 who "were deported and lost within an alienating cultural atmosphere…the daily life they led was a source of anguish and a feeling of inferiority overpowered them. Members of the Armenian diaspora waited at least for two generations repressing their anger, and afterward demanded compensation for their suffering… The most reasonable way for this was addressing the current authorities of the state in charge of this fate. They did so exactly.

Mahcupyan added: "By ascribing an ideological dimension to what they have gone through, they gradually turned the incidents into a doctrine and a dogma. At the risk of reducing the possibility of their demands to be realized at the minimum level, they defined them within a symbolic language by extending them to the maximum level."

At the end of the article Mahcupyan asked: "Did this strategy succeed? It is not possible to assert that it did not achieve anything. At least many countries officially recognize the genocide today. If this was the main target, there would be no problem. Another century can pass with the same trend since there are many more countries yet to recognize it. However, if Turkey's recognition of the genocide is to be considered a success, then we cannot talk about success. It would be a desperate mistake to believe that the recognition of genocide by other countries will also lead Turkey to

recognize it, because that development causes Turkey's denial policy to garner public support. Apparently, it is high time for the Armenian diaspora, by overcoming the psychology of maintaining the agony of past, to ask itself what it really wants."

And this brings us to the 6th and most important principle;

6. For a solution to the Armenian question in Turkey descendants of the survivors of the genocide must first develop realistic demands based on accurate historical and legal considerations.

Coming from a prominent intellectual, a member of the Commission of the Wise and a pro-AKP public figure of Armenian descent, Mahcupyan's reflections are worth considering.