

Միաբանք և այցելութ Հայ Երուսաղէմի, էջ 359:

9.-Տե՛ս Աստուածատուր Եպս. Յովհաննէսեանց, «Ժամանակագրական պատմութիւն Ս.Երուսաղէմի», հտ. Ա-Բ, Երուսաղէմ, 1890, էջ 50-55:

10.-Կարապետ Բ. Ուլենցի, Կաթողիկոս ամենայն հայոց 1726-1729 թթ.:

11.-Տե՛ս Ն.Պօղոսեան, «Կ.Պոլսի հայերի մամակը Երուսաղէմի Գրիգոր պատրիարքին», «Բանբեր» Երևանի համալսարանի, 2012, ք. 136.1, էջ 63-72:

12.-Կենն-երիտասարդ:

13.-Գր. Եղբայակրի մամակը քաղել ենք Աստուածատուր Եպս. Տէր Յովհաննէսեանցի «Ժամանակագրական պատմութիւն Ս. Երուսաղէմի» գրքից, հտ. Բ, Երուսաղէմ, 1890, էջ 30:

14.-Տե՛ս օրինակ՝ Մկրտիչ Եպս. Աղաւնունի, Հայկական հին վանքեր և եկեղեցիներ Սուրբ երկրին մէջ, Երուս., 1931, էջ 259:

15.-Աստուածատուր Եպս. Տէր Յովհաննէսեանց, նոյն տեղում, էջ 30:

16.-Տե՛ս Ն. Միքայէլեան, Նկարիչ Յովհաննէս Երուսաղէմացին Եգիպտոսում, ՊԲՀ, 1967, ք. 2-3, էջ 273: Երկու Հանճաններին նոյնացնելու վրիպումը, որ գրատր աղբիւրներում բերւա սկիզբ է առնում Աստուածատուր Եպս. Տէր Յովհաննէսեանցի «Պատմութիւնից», մինչև վերջին տամանակները խիստ տարածուած էր և անցնում էր գրքից գիրք, հանդիպում է նաև Սկ. Աղաւնունու երկերում, անգամ համացանցային միջոցներում է կարելի է այդ շփոթին համոզուել:

17.-Յովհաննէս Հաննա Երուսաղէմացի, «Գիրք Պատմութեան Սրբոյ եւ մեծի Քաղաքիս Աստուծոյ Երուսաղէմի», Կ.Պոլիս, 1731: Տիտղոսաբերքին նշուած է 1727 թուականը, որ բերւա պատմութիւնն աւարտելու տարին է: Պատմութիւնից քաղուած մեջբերումների էջերը կնշենք շարադրանքում:



Ս. Յակոբ Մայր Տաճար
Հիւսիսային կողմ

THE THEME OF GENOCIDE IN CONTEMPORARY ARMENIAN LITERATURE (*)

Minas Kojayan

"We were born to sing the song of LOVE..."
(Siamanto, 1978-1915)

As a subtitle for my presentation, I chose this specific quote, which belongs to the universally respected Armenian poet, Siamanto (Atom Yarjanian), who was hailed from the town of Agn in Western Armenia and was martyred during the genocide of the Armenians perpetrated by Ottoman Turkey beginning in 1915. Unfortunately, in the annals of modern Armenian literature, stemming from the end of the 19th century until the present era, the primary or, dare say, prevailing theme of Armenian poets and prose writers has centered on socio-economic persecutions, mass slaughters, Genocide and rebirth.

The aforementioned assertion pertains not only to Armenian authors writing in their native Armenian, but also to foreign language authors of Armenian origin who lived throughout the Middle East, as well as in Russia, Italy, France, Great Britain, the United States, Canada, and South America. Within the modern Armenian literary heritage, there is nary an author, writing in Armenian or a foreign language, who has not reflected on the theme of the Armenian Genocide. The reason for this is quite clear, since, between 1915 and 1923, the overwhelming majority of the population of an entire civilization was annihilated and dispossessed of its 3,500-year-old homeland, and its hearths, properties, national and sacred treasures, and cultural and spiritual centers. Essentially, a nation was stripped of its patrimonial land and haven. The force of the blow was so horrific and incompatible with the mindset of rational creatures that, to this very day, the repercussions of the crime painfully cry out within the souls of Armenians. Alas, Armenians are born with this pain, grow up with this pain, and leave this world with a sense of sorrow.

In this sense, races and nations who have experienced genocide and holocaust can well understand the pain of the Armenians. We hope for the day when such nations can form a united front in pursuit of justice, and, leaving aside political

and economic horse-trading, genuinely cooperate with one another. Such unity would relegate the genocide denialist progeny of the perpetrators of such atrocities to the judgement of history.

A. The Annihilation

There exists a wealth of literature in Armenian and foreign languages, in which authors, armed with a rich linguistic tapestry granted to many a language, have realistically depicted the annihilation of the Armenians. Some authors, at different stages of their youth, had been eyewitnesses to the horrors, beheadings, kidnappings, rape, mass human incinerations in churches and asphyxiations in caves, burials of the living in ditches, and forced or self-willed drownings in the Euphrates and Tigris rivers, in Lake Van, and in the Black Sea, which befell their fathers and mothers, sisters and brothers. In the literature of the eyewitness authors, the colors are quite vivid, while the expressions addressed to the Turks and Kurds are impulsive. Its messaging tends to center on hatred and revenge, and, in some cases, fatalism and submissiveness. It is also not uncommon to recognize the "malaise" of self-guilt in a fair number of works by eyewitness authors.

The author Vahram Mavian, born in Jerusalem in 1926 to genocide survivors, is one such example. Upon graduating with distinction from the Holy Translators' Armenian School, established in the Armenian Quarter of the Old City of Jerusalem by the Armenian Patriarchate of Saints James, and studying in Great Britain, Northern Ireland, and Italy, Mavian became one of the most renowned diasporan Armenian writers of his time. Later in life, he served as the Deputy Director of the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation in Lisbon, Portugal. The protagonist of his short story, titled "Fight on Boys, Fight Bravely," would often state: "We were unable to fight. We surrendered too quickly. At least you should continue the fight."

Similarly, in a thriller novel, published in 1929 by a well-known French Armenian author, writing primarily in Armenian and French under the pen name of Armen Lubin, one of its protagonists, who serves as a voice of the masses, admonishes his compatriots in a Parisian cafe with the following indictment: "Extinguished ashes, all of you. Peddlers of leather, all of you. You only

shiver with your fingers... You weaklings... You were like this in Constantinople. Your fathers were also like this" ("Retreat Without Song", by Shahan Shahnour, 1929). The prolific Soviet Armenian poet, Yeghishe Charents, who fell victim to Stalin's "Great Purge" in 1937 wrote the following in his poem, *Vision of Death*: "Oh, our wolf has not been of the bronze variant..."

B.) The terror of genocide as an impetus for struggle and revenge

Armenian schools throughout the diaspora long stressed the severity of the terror of genocide to students in classrooms ranging from the early formative years all the way through high school. Post-genocide generations of youth were nurtured and disciplined with such nourishment. Literature and music were served as the ideal medium for such nourishment. In addition to vignettes about heroic episodes of self-defense, the subject of genocide prevails through horrific cases of terror experienced by the masses during the death marches into the Syrian desert.

The detailed depiction of horrific episodes and its terrifying characteristics, at the very least, found its place in the genre of fiction. Be that as it may, the produced literature is enough to instill revenge and epic proportions of hatred within the hearts and minds of post-genocide generations. Feelings of hatred and revenge among members of such generations awakened the notion of struggling against and inflicting punitive measures towards the perpetrators.

On the other hand, these same feelings strengthened post-genocide generations' genuine aspiration to gather, unite, and move forward with one fist. Among some writers, the idea of revenge was transformed into a positive force, thus prompting the masses to think in terms of "living and creating in the face of death," as the acclaimed Soviet Armenian poetess, Silva Kaputikyan writes: "[We will] compensate one loss tenfold. While the city of Van lay waste, our capital, Yerevan, shall be built and will blossom. The father of modern Armenian music, the great Komitas, who witnessed yet outlived the horrors of genocide, will inspire the likes of Aram Khachaturian," and so forth.

It is interesting and instructive to read the oft-repeated short story passage by one of the most talented writers of Armenian descent, American

Armenian author William Saroyan, portraying the chance encounter in the Russian city of Rostov-on-Don of an American Armenian with a local bartender and survivor of the genocide hailing from the Western Armenian town of Mush:

"I should like to see any power of the world destroy this race, this small tribe of unimportant people, whose wars have all been fought and lost, whose structures have crumbled, literature is unread, music is unheard, and prayers are no more answered. Go ahead, destroy Armenia. See if you can do it. Send them into the desert without bread and water. Burn their homes and churches. Then see if they will not laugh, sing and pray again. For when two of them meet anywhere in the world, see if they will not create a New Armenia."

By resonating the reality of genocide and the irrevocable loss of patrimonial lands and loved ones, post-genocide era Armenian literature inspired Armenian youth in the 1970s and 80s to resort to the option of armed struggle to bring about justice for the Armenian nation. Unfortunately, the aforementioned struggle is often referred in a cheap-shot manner as "Armenian terrorism" by Turkey, with the blessing of the United States of America and its satellite states.

It is abundantly clear to all of us that the path to resolving issues has never relied on acts of terrorism. Resorting to such extremes, however, has allowed some non-state actors, as well as traumatized nations and collectives, to have their voices and positions heard by the international community. It is also quite clear to us that even some nation-states have resorted to such extremes, in order to resolve issues or to divert attention from core problems.

For the most part, the option of armed struggle has not been blatantly encouraged or extolled in contemporary Armenian literature, despite some authors' heartfelt sympathy towards the executors of such deeds. It is rare to come across platitudes by an author, such as "great job, boys, you did well," or similar pathetic appeals in works of literature. Rather, the motivation to struggle has been explained through the words and activities of literary characters.

Moreover, it is not difficult to notice a sense of veiled sympathy or secret approval by some present-day writers. In this context, it is worth noting that the combination of cold silence

and apathy, calculated denial of genocide, and clever attempts to blame the victim of atrocities, as opposed to the victimizer, by successive governments and authorities in Turkey, with the tacit support of Ankara's allies and strategic partners, have poured fuel on the fire burning in the hearts of many an Armenian.

C.) The question of cultural genocide or assimilation as a result of physical genocide, as addressed in contemporary Armenian literature.

Literature is life's mirror and reflection, which reaches the masses in an artistic language, awakens emotions and aspirations in their souls, and plants a sense of purpose in their lives. And it is through the art of the word that readers come across ideologies. In post-genocide Armenian literature, the continuation of the atrocities appears in the form of white (or cultural) genocide and its concomitant ramifications, and is reflected in the works of nearly all Armenian and foreign language authors. Among western writers (both European Armenian and American Armenian), a notable differentiation is apparent with respect to the threat of white genocide. Specifically, the concept of integration is viewed positively among the latter, whereas those writing in the Armenian language do not share the same sympathy on this question.

The primary danger of concern to Armenian intellectuals, including both clerical and lay leaders, revolves around the notion of assimilation, which is manifested through the loss of one's native tongue, and by distancing oneself from national and ethnic traditions, as well as from the Armenian Apostolic Church. There exists an enormous repository of literature on the aforementioned subject alone. The firm belief of "returning to the fatherland" is a recurring theme among post-genocide authors. Hence, it is imperative for Armenians to maintain their national identity, in order to realize one's right of return. A glimpse at a few notable titles of literary works from this era attests to the primacy of language and traditions in the maintenance of the Armenian national identity. For example:

- Hagop Oshagan (1883-1948, writer, prominent literary critic and teacher, survivor), the title of his literary work is very impressive "Imperial Triumphant Song or Open letter to the World".

- William Saroyan's English language

essay "The Armenian Mouse" (1964), as well as his well-known short story, "The Armenian and the Armenian" (1935).

- Genocide survivor Leon Zaven Surmelian's English language novel, "I Ask You, Ladies and Gentlemen" (1945).

- Colgate University Professor Peter Balakian's memoir, "Black Dog of Fate" (1997), the winner of the PEN/Martha Albrand Award for the Art of the Memoir.

- Michael J. Arlen's National Book Award winner, "Passage to Ararat" (1975).

- Shahan Shahnour's novel in the Armenian language, entitled "Retreat Without Song" (published in France, 1929).

- Vahan Tekeyan's poem in the Armenian language, entitled "For Armenia" (written in 1901, published in an anthology called "Hayergutun" or "Song of Armenia and Armenians" in Egypt, 1943).

- Hakob Karapents' short story in the Armenian language, entitled "The Last Station" (published in the United States).

- Vahram Mavian's short story in the Armenian language, entitled "What's Hayeren, Daddy?" (published in Jerusalem, lived in Jerusalem, Cyprus and Portugal).

- Genocide survivor Antranig Dzarugian's poem in the Armenian language, entitled "A Vow to Ararat" (published in the author's memoir titled "Ethereal Aleppo" in Lebanon, 1980).

The most thrilling work, which captures the theme of cultural genocide, belongs to the defiant French-Armenian prose writer, Shahan Shahnour, and his 1929 novel "Retreat Without Song." At first glance, it appears that the story line revolves around a fling between Pierre, a genocide survivor who ends up in Paris against his will, and a French lady named Nenette. In reality, however, the novel conveys a deep sense of patriotism. The young author, Shahnour, sounds the alarm with a sobering call to his brethren, who quietly retreat from their national identity, assimilate in their adopted homelands, and turn a blind eye to their roots. According to the author, the only way to save the dispersed Armenian nation from the calamity of assimilation is to return to the fatherland and participate in its physical and cultural rejuvenation, in spite of the Sovietization of what little remains of the homeland. In a moment of fury and indignation, one of the novel's protago-

nists delivers the following outcry in the faces of his friends: "Extinguished ashes, all of you. You only care about your narrow interests. You only shiver with your fingers. We have a fatherland, and we must be ready to return there. That's what you ought to be dealing with. We must drain the swamp, and open new channels... You weaklings!"

To this very day, the aforementioned novel's articulated ideas freshly resonate in the ears of dispersed Armenians. It is not coincidental that this particular novel, "Retreat Without Song," has left an indelible trace on future works of Armenian literature.

D.) Soviet Armenian Literature

During the course of 70 years, the subject of the Armenian Genocide embarked on an interesting journey within Soviet Armenian literature. Despite the dictatorship of the proletariat, the forcible establishment of an economic system predicated on collective and state-owned farming, as well as decades of bitter cult worship and other coarse Marxist-Communist experiments, the subject of genocide was never forgotten in Soviet Armenian literature. Such was even the case among poets and prose writers, who were faithful adherents of the socialist realist genre of art and literature dictated by the Communist party. Such writers were well aware of the risks associated with the subject of the Armenian Genocide, including being branded a nationalist, being sent to the Gulags in the steppes of Siberia, or being incarcerated in the dark jails of the NKVD and later KGB. One of the main reasons for the fearlessness of Soviet Armenian writers, who dared to write about the genocide, is due to the fact that an overwhelming majority of such writers witnessed and survived its horrors.

One of the most notable Soviet Armenian writers was Yeghishe Charents (1897 - 1937, killed while under incarceration during Stalin's Great Purge). The great author's primary thoughts can be summarized in the following manner:

"Our wolf has not been of the bronze variant, or even of the stone or wooden variant. Rather, our wolf has only shrieked before the biblical mountain." In this passage, the author conveys the feeling that during the course of the genocide, Armenians should have defended themselves by relying on "the sword." Paraphrasing the author,

"the curly-haired lad," who witnessed massacres and sheer butchery, represents all Armenians, and must grow and gain strength. And while the lad grows up, he will never forget "our songs of mourning" or "our blood-soaked wounds." In the words of the author, "No matter where I am, I shall not forget our mournful songs... Go anywhere in this world, yet you'll not find a summit as white as that of Mount Ararat. As the path to glory is endless, so is the love for my Mount Massis." Essentially, no matter that which transpires, the path to glory is through Massis, the majestic biblical mountain which symbolizes the struggle of the Armenian people.

Another noteworthy writer was Avetik Isahakyan (1875 - 1957), who was exiled due to his revolutionary thoughts during the era of Tsarist Russian rule over Eastern Armenia. After the formation of the Soviet Union, and quite cognizant of the situation established by the Bolshevik authorities, Isahakyan, nevertheless, repatriated to Soviet Armenia around the age of 50. In his poem titled "Armenia" and in other writings, the following thought reverberates like a red piece of thread:

"Although you were sold out by 'friends,' laid to waste and left orphaned under the heel of your enemies, and were eternalized with the stamp of horrors and genocide, nevertheless, you will definitely live to witness a glorious resurrection."

The great poet Paruyr Sevak (1924 - 1971) died in an automobile accident, although the Armenian masses believe that he was deliberately "wiped out" by the Soviet authorities due to his literary defiance. One of his stirring poems ends in the following words:

"We are few, yet they call us Armenians. And why should we not be proud? We are here now, we will be here tomorrow, and will still multiply.

The author's reference in the aforementioned verse is clear. Due to the bloody events of the not-so-distant past, the Armenian nation has yet to grow.

Hovhannes Shiraz (1915 - 1984) was one of the most patriotic of Soviet Armenian poets, whose works were subject to serious censorship during the Soviet era. The name "Shiraz," the aspirations of the Armenians, and the seizure of Mount Ararat - the latter symbolizing the suffering and grief, yet fulfillment of hopes and dreams, of the Armenians - are synonymous. Shiraz's poems

on the subject of the Armenian Genocide are required reading in the literature textbooks of Armenian schools in Armenia and throughout the diaspora, and are often recited by students during artistic programs.

*"Let all nations reach the moon,
But let Armenians reach Massis."*

*"As long as you do not have a hut in the fatherland,
You are just a forgotten orphan under the foreign moon."*

I would like to conclude my presentation with the words of Shiraz and his poem, "Will" ("Gdag" in Armenian), which has found a permanent place in the hearts of many an Armenian, and is akin to a prayer when recited.

"Will"

My son, what shall I will to you, what shall I will to you, my dear,

That you may remember me in coming sorrow or cheer?

I've no treasures, what treasure, treasure's the light of my eyes,

Only you are my treasure, you treasure of my treasures.

I want to will such treasure for you as your father that

In any other country to will a father cannot;

*I am willing that to you which in our great century
Small men have imprisoned and also chained in the clouds;*

I will to you our mountain so that you take it from black cloud

And bring it home carrying it with our spotless justice,

So that you may throw, my dear, even with your poor small paw,

To our side our mountain that's your justice's sea of strength,

And when you bring it, my dear, take my heart out of my tomb,

And toward the free above rise and take with you my heart,

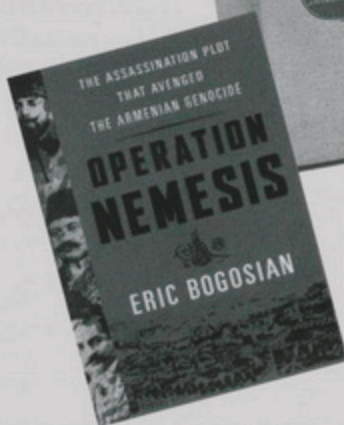
And bury my heart under the snows of Mount Ararat,

So that in my tomb as well it won't be cold from the fire of longing for centuries.

*I will to you Mount Ararat, that you may keep for-
ever,
As our language and also as your father's home's
pillar.*

(*) A more concise version of this essay was presented at the
"5th Global Conference on Genocide
The International Network of Genocide Scholars"
From 26-29 June 2016
The Hebrew University Of Jerusalem
The Van Leer Jerusalem Institute

Some of the literary works on
the theme of the Armenian
Genocide



We will never
Անցնի Երբեք

forget you.
պէտք չէ մոռնուիլ:

