



By Dr. Ferruh  
DEMİRMEN\*

# HOW THE FOOD GURU ANTHONY BOURDAIN OF CNN TURNED INTO AN ARMENIAN PROPAGANDIST, AND PROSPECTS OF **TURKEY-ARMENIA** RELATIONS

**Preface by the author:** This opinion piece was prepared right after the “Anthony Bourdain feat. Serj Tankian in Armenia - Parts Unknown,” TV program was aired in many parts of the world by CNN on May 20, 2018. But out of respect to Mr. Bourdain and his family, the publication of the article was put on hold until now following his tragic death in France in June 2018.

Mr. Bourdain, a celebrity chef and storyteller, when he ventured into his Armenia program, probably had all the good intentions to explore Armenian culture and cuisine and tell his story to his followers. But in the process he fell victim to Armenian propaganda, and the result was appalling. A program that was supposed to be about travel, culture and food turned into a politically charged piece advocating “Arme-

nian genocide.” Still worse, the program contained serious falsehoods. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B0st2H8cOXw>.

The diatribe continued into the Nagorno-Karabakh issue, without saying a word on the 1992 Khojaly Massacre and the unfulfilled UN General Assembly resolution on the withdrawal of all Armenian forces from the occupied Azerbaijani territory.

On the 1915 events in Ottoman Anatolia, Mr. Bourdain, while describing himself as “a casual observer,” talked more like an Armenian spokesperson, claiming that the “Ottomans had justified their actions by the widely held sentiment that the Christian Armenians would align themselves with a hostile and Christian Russia threatening their borders” (notice the use of the word “sentiment” and emphasis on “Christian”), and that the Ottomans had “rounded up Armenian intellectu-

als and summarily executed them.” Anyone left was then marched towards the Syrian desert, “deliberately starving them along the way.”

He described the events as “a concerted and organized effort to eradicate an ethnic and national group,” then concluding: “So, this is genocide, right”?

Bowing his head in agreement, his Armenian host weighed in: “Most estimates historically put the Armenian losses at around 1.5 million.”

The misinformation and distortions regarding the genocide accusation were shocking, but given the ingrained pro-Armenian, anti-Turkish/anti-Muslim bias in the Western media, not surprising. What was also striking was that Bourdain had been well coached by his mentors, and he recited the usual “genocide” lines with confidence and enthusiasm.



**Photo 1:** Purported Armenian victims at undisclosed location.  
In reality the victims are Muslims massacred near Kars.

## Faked photo representations

The few photographs interspersed during the program added insult to injury. At least one photo had unmistakable signs of Photoshop artistry. One of the photos showed dead, mutilated bodies of children and women (photo-1). The message for the audience was that these were Armenian victims killed by barbarian Turks.

But in reality, the gruesome pictures were those of Muslim victims killed by Tashnak Armenians on 25 April 1918 at a location called Subatan near the city of Kars in eastern Turkey. The photo is found in the Turkish Military Archives "ATASE" (Askeri Tarih ve Stratejik Etüd).

Another photo included in the program shows several men hanged from scaffolds with what appears to

be Ottoman soldiers holding guard (photo-2). The message intended was again obvious: These were innocent Armenian leaders hanged mercilessly by the brutal Turks.

But this photo was also a forgery. About three quarters of the photo on the right-hand side was copied from page 507 of the book, *Die Weltkriegsspionage*, dealing with World War-I espionage, authored by General von Lettow-Vorbeck. The German text did not identify the venue, the date and the circumstances of the execution, or the nationality of the victims. The section on the left side (where Bourdain's portrait is superimposed) was cunningly annexed from another source through Photoshop (best viewed at high magnification). Unlike in the rest of the photo, here we see guards apparently wearing helmets with crescent and star. The original photo from *Die Weltkriegsspionage* has no such figures.

One possibility is that the photo shows executions in Haifa of spies caught working for British interests in Palestine during World War-I. Judging from the fur hats worn by the guards, however, it is more likely that the guards are Cossacks, with executions somewhere in Russia. The photo arguably has nothing to do with "Armenian genocide."

Still another picture (photo-3) showed corpses laid in front of a building, apparently a church or monastery, at an undisclosed location on an undisclosed date. It was not clear what the photo had to do with "Armenian genocide." Several clergymen, Armenian or Russian, were watching quizzically at the dead bodies. The picture probably depicts Armenians that perished from disease, malnutrition, etc. in the First Republic of Armenia, 1918-1920. It is known from the work of Russian historian A.A. Lalaian of



**Photo 2:** Armenian leaders purportedly hanged by Turks.  
 Photo in part from German espionage book, *Die Weltkriegsspionage*.

Armenian origin that 195,000 Armenian citizens, or 22% of the total Armenian population, lost their lives due to deprivation and other causes during this fascist regime.

(By comparison, loses in the First Republic of Armenia, most of them due to killings, for Azeri Turks were 200,000 (77%) and Kurds 24,500 (98%), respectively. Chilling, eye-witness accounts of brutality against civilian Muslims by men under the leadership of Drastamat Kanayan ("Dro"), an Armenian commander, recounted by Robert Dunn in his book, *World Alive, A Personal Story*. Dunn was the intelligence officer of Rear Admiral Bristol, the U.S. High Commissioner in Turkey during 1919-27).

Deceitful manipulation through photography is nothing new in the propaganda arsenal of Armenian propagandists. For example, in December 2009 ANCA (Armenian National

Committee of America) shamelessly used the Subatan forgery represented in photo-1 on one of its posters as a background when it urged President Obama to recognize "Armenian Genocide."

We also know of numerous other photo-forgeries, e.g., ghastly scenes of crucified women taken from a 1919 Hollywood film, *Ravished Armenia*, meant to depict Armenian women killed by barbarian Turks, or puppies at the foot of Atatürk in original photo changed, through Photoshop, into a dead child with his guts hanging out.

Photo-1 is perhaps the "crown forgery" employed by the Diaspora con artists. While not included in the CNN program, a rival to the photo-1 scene is the one shown in photo-4. When the "genocide" story is told, Armenian con artists are known to resort to this forgery in trying to evoke the horror of "Armenian geno-

cide" in the minds of the viewers. A pyramid of skulls is surely enough to evoke horror, and the casual viewer will think that these are the skulls of innocent Armenians. Only a select few of the viewers will realize that this macabre scene is in fact a 1871 painting (*"Apotheosis of War"*) by Russian artist Vasily Vereshchagin, currently on display in the Tretyakov Gallery in Moscow. The artist died in 1904.

This fakery was brazenly used in "Armenian Genocide," a supposed documentary film funded by Armenian sources and aired on TV in the USA by Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) on April 17, 2006. (PBS is known to provide "educational services!"). It was also used by ANCA in 2009 on a poster urging President Obama to recognize "Armenian genocide."

The fakery in fact dates back to 1921 in connection with the murder trial



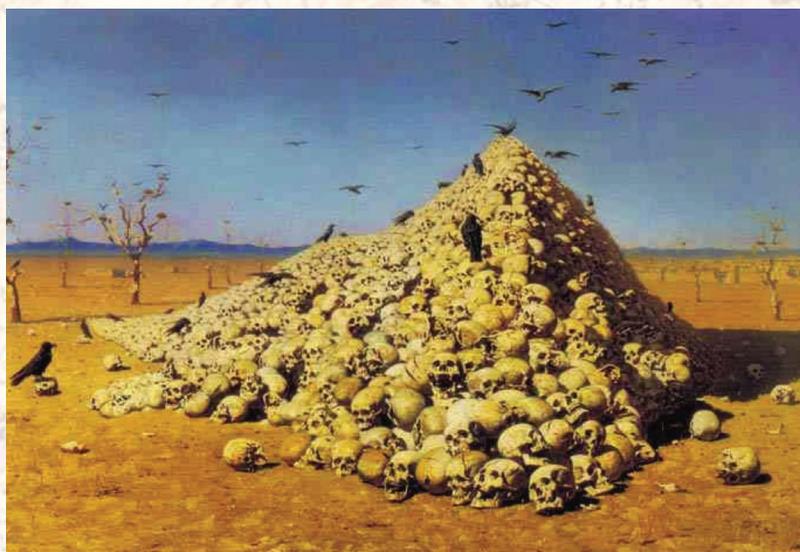
**Photo 3:** Scene of corpses unidentified as to date and location. Likely a church at Etchmiadzin near Yerevan, 1918-20.

of Talat Pasha, the Ottoman Minister of the Interior, in Berlin. The cover of a book, *Der Völkermord*, published in that year, showed the pyramid of skulls together with the portrait of Talat Pasha. Another public appearance of this fakery was in an international festival in Toronto, Canada in the 1970s. Subsequently, Tessa Hofmann, the German academician, used the same fakery in a new book, also titled *Der Völkermord*, she edited in 1980 (photo-5). Inside the book the cover photo is credited as showing "Turkish barbarism." While the book cover itself was red, the Russian painting was cleverly shown in black and white, to give the impression that it is a photograph of early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Hofmann's skull-dugger was exposed by Prof. Türkkaya Ataöv in 1985.

The whole production was despicable deception in "pursuit of scholarship."

With a change of heart, Hofmann subsequently had her book cover changed in 1985 with another horrid image of unknown origin, but again with Talat Pasha's portrait superimposed. Inside her book she entered

another picture showing half-naked women assaulted by men. The caption under the picture said: "Tortured and violated Armenians. Photographed on the street between Trabzon to Erzin-can by a German officer."



**Photo 4:** Painting ("Apotheosis of War") by Russian artist Vasily Vereshchagin in 1871.

This image in fact was from a painting named “*Les Horreur de la Guerre*” by French painter Paul-Emile Boutigny (1853-1929). As in *Der Völkermord*, the original painting was in color, but the image in the book was in black and white. So much about scholastic honesty!

Not surprisingly, Hofmann has received many accolades from Armenia, including an honorary professorship. She was the mentor and protégée of Dr. Taner Akçam following Akçam’s escape from Turkish prison and taking refuge in Germany in 1977.

### A tall story of untruths

Before venturing into his CNN-Armenian TV show, it would have been good if Mr. Bourdain had first looked at the other side of the coin on “Armenian genocide” to get a balanced view. Had he done so, he would have found out that, contrary to the genocide allegations, the Ottomans had not acted out of a “widely held sentiment,” but from the solid fact that the Armenians had launched a massive revolt against their government in the midst of an all-out war (WW-I), and were openly collaborating with the invading Russian army. The rebellion was executed by armed militias, who received support and sanctuary from local Armenians. Armenian volunteers also joined the French forces attacking from the south.

In plain English, it was an act of treason.

The Ottoman government had no choice but to relocate Armenians in central and eastern Anatolia to Greater Syria (which, by the way, is not a “desert”) in the south, while sparing Armenians in the western Anatolia.

It was purely a defense measure. The sick, the elderly, orphaned children, government employees, and Catholic and Protestant Armenians, were exempted from the relocation orders.

Forced migration is nothing new in the history of mankind. As jurist and historian Sam Weems has observed, displacement of populations suspected of disloyalty or treason was a customary war measure throughout

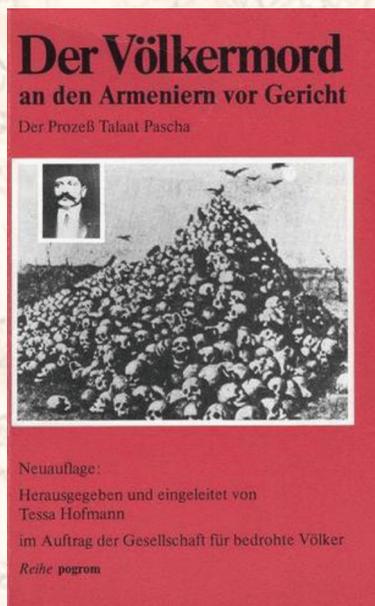
1918 the government issued the “Decree of Return” whereby the refugees could return and receive their land and home back.

These facts would have readily dispelled the notion that the 1915 events in Anatolia constituted genocide, as prescribed in the 1948 UN Convention on Genocide. For both the “intent” element as well as the requirement of a verdict by an authorized tribunal were missing.

To reach that conclusion, Mr Bourdain could have also read two recent international court decisions on “Armenian genocide:” the one by the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) on October 15, 2105 (“Switzerland-Perinçek” case) and the other by France’s Constitutional Council on January 8, 2016. It doesn’t take much omniscience to appreciate that “Armenian genocide” has no judicial basis, as required by the UN Convention.

If he had a bit more curiosity, Mr. Bourdain would have learned a lot more, e.g., the claim that the 235 Armenian intellectuals that were arrested in Istanbul on April 24, 1915 and later summarily executed, is false. These leaders, the instigators of the Armenian insurrection, were sent to the town of Çankırı near Ankara. Some of the detainees were released, others sent to other cities, and only 3 died in 1918: one of natural causes, the other two murdered. The culprits were tried and hanged.

As for the claim of 1.5 million Armenian deaths, the figure cited is absurd. As noted by Bruce Fein, President Reagan’s legal advisor who oversaw an investigation of the 1915 Anatolian events conducted in the White House, the



**Photo 5:** Cover of book edited by Prof. Tessa Hofmann, 1980.

human history. Forced migration of Americans of Japanese ancestry, who in fact had not committed any crime, during WW-II is one example.

Ottoman government orders to local officials noted specifically that the refugees should not be harmed, and that their needs should be taken care of during and after relocation. Those who disobeyed these orders and harmed the refugees were subsequently tried in court martials and punished. The punishments included 67 death sentences. On December 31,

original estimate of the Armenian casualties according to Armenian sources was 280,000-750,000: [https://www.huffingtonpost.com/bruce-fein/lies-damn-lies-and-armeni\\_b\\_211408.html](https://www.huffingtonpost.com/bruce-fein/lies-damn-lies-and-armeni_b_211408.html). Armenians then raised their death count to 800,000 to “test the waters,” hiked the number even further, and eventually settled at around 1.5 million.” Some mathematics!

According to Vahan Vardapet, an Armenian cleric, the prewar Ottoman Armenian population was 1.26 million. By official Ottoman statistics, the population of Armenians in the Empire was roughly 1.3 million, and in Anatolia alone, 736,000. Hence the claim of 1.5 million Armenian has no foundation.

According to Ottoman archives, Armenians forced to relocate numbered 438,750, and those that died on route, 56,600. The casualties were due to chaos, disease, famine & massacre by bandits. Only about 10,000 Armenians were massacred by criminal elements. Of the refugees relocated, 382,000 safely reached their destination. The League of Nations General Secretary Sir Drummond reported on 1.3.1920 that “massacres [of Armenian refugees] were carried by bands which were totally outside the control of the Central Government.”

As for what happened to other Ottoman Armenians, the League’s High Commissioner for Refugees Fridtjof Nansen reported in 1929 that 200,000 Armenians had died while fighting on the side of the Allies. After the war, 586,000 Ottoman Armenians fled to Caucasia, and as noted above, 195,000 of them perished from various causes in the First Republic of Armenia, 1918-1920. Emigration to other lands,

in particular Europe and America, started in late 1920s.

It needs to be also pointed out that for about 600 years Armenians lived peacefully with Ottoman Turks, prospering in trade and artisanship, freely exercising their religion, and many of them holding high government positions: 29 “pasha”s, 22 ministers, 33 deputies, 7 ambassadors. At one point, about one-third of the bureaucracy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the Sublime Porte was Armenian. In 1913 the foreign minister in the Ottoman cabinet was an Armenian.

And during World War-I Hrant Abro, an Armenian, was advisor to the Ottoman Ministry of Foreign Affairs and accompanied Talat Pasha, the Grand Vizier, at the Brest-Litovsk peace negotiations with Soviets in early 1918.

These facts easily refute the accusation of “Armenian genocide.” There was no intent on the part of the Ottoman government to annihilate Armenians. Mr. Bourdain should have thus answered an “inconvenient question:” If the Ottomans had intent to “eradicate” Armenians because of their race, religion, or ethnicity, why did they wait for 600 years to do so?

Contrasting the claims of Armenian deaths during the alleged genocide, it is morally reprehensible that no mention is ever made, in the CNN program - and most generally in the Western media - of Muslims killed in cold blood by Armenian revolutionaries. During 1910-1922 alone, 519,000 Muslim civilians, most of them Turks, and some Jews as well, fell victim to blood-thirsty Armenian bands terrorizing the countryside. It was a bloody campaign of ethnic cleansing.

As many as 185 Muslim mass burial sites have been discovered in eastern and southeastern Anatolia.

Why such high casualties on the Muslim side? Because the men folk who could defend their families in Muslim villages and towns had been drafted into the Ottoman army to fight the war. The civilian Muslims, women, children and the elderly, were left behind at the mercy of marauding Armenian gangs.

Considering the pre-war census data, some 4.3% of the Armenian population (roughly 1.3 million) in the Ottoman Empire died during relocation due to all causes, but less than 1% due to killings by criminal elements. In contrast, some 3.3% of civilian Muslim population (roughly 15.5 million) died at the hands of Armenian bands. So, then, which side suffered more from inter-communal violence?

Should we assume that, unlike the Christian deaths, Muslim deaths do not count in the conscience of the Western media such as CNN? According to Bruce Fein, 2.4 million Muslims in Anatolia lost their lives during the war.

Another disconcerting aspect of the Anthony Bourdain program is that the “Armenian genocide” topic is broached as an established fact, without any hint as to its controversial aspect. Mr. Bourdain should have known that the “genocide” is a pretty serious crime, and charging someone with this heinous crime without due process in a court of law is not acceptable. Unlike the Holocaust, and the Rwandan, Srebrenica and Cambodian genocides (the last-named officially recognized on November. 15, 2018), “Armenian genocide” has not been litigated in a court of law, and has not been rec-

ognized by the UN. Thus, it remains unproven.

Yes, there are claims by Armenian sources that war crimes tribunals held shortly after WW-I by the newly established Ottoman government concluded that the former leadership (Committee of Union and Progress) was responsible for premeditated killings of Armenians. But as noted by Professor Guenter Lewy of the University of Massachusetts, these tribunals were no more than “kangaroo courts” held at the instigation of the Allied Powers by a government that was beholden to these powers. The protection of due process was completely absent, and witnesses and cross examination were not allowed. (See *The Armenian Massacres in Ottoman Turkey: A Disputed Genocide*, by Guenter Lewy, University of Utah Press, 2005). The Allies themselves have admitted that these proceedings were a travesty of justice.

In contrast, a judicial process that came to be closest to the Nuremberg Tribunal was the 1919-1921 Malta Tribunal convened by the British on their colony Malta. Evidence gathered from various sources, including those at the U.S. State Department in Washington, D.C., by the British had no probative value. All the accused – 144 high Ottoman officials – detained for trial were freed for lack evidence and returned to Turkish soil. In effect, Turks were vindicated.

Last, but not least, if Mr. Bourdain had distrusted such narratives and wanted to hear the historical truth from a prominent Armenian, he could have read the January 30, 1919 letter to the editor of *The Times* of London where Boghos Nubar Pasha admitted freely that his people had been belligerents during WW-I and had fought on the side of the Allies

on all fronts. Nubar Pasha was the president of one of the Armenian delegations at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919.

Or still better, Mr Bourdain could have read the *Manifesto of Hovhannes Katchaznoui* delivered at the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF) Congress in Bucharest in 1923. That way, he could have gotten the facts from the “horse’s mouth,” so to speak. Katchaznoui was no ordinary Armenian; he was the First Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia in 1918-1919. Observing that the Armenians had embraced Russia whole-heartedly, Katchaznoui faulted the ARF for the Armenian insurrection and admonished the party: “ARF has nothing to do any more.”

One problem Mr. Bourdain would have faced, however, is that, thanks to the “savvy” or “craftiness” of Dashnaks, the Manifesto nowadays is difficult to find in the libraries of the world.

As a final point, Mr. Bourdain obviously was not told by his mentors that, as late as 2015, Dikran Kevorkyan, President of the Kandilli Armenian Church Foundation, Istanbul, drew a distinction between genocide and relocation of Armenians, chastising the Armenian Diaspora for abusing the 1915 tragedy - for Muslims and Armenians alike - for “economic purposes” to help Armenia. He noted that there was no genocide, and that two of his uncles had died while fighting in the Ottoman army during WW-I.

### Is there any hope?

Given the mindset on display in the CNN-Bourdain program, we may ask: Is there a hope for Turkey-

Armenia reconciliation? The statement from Mr. Bourdain’s host, an American-born professor now living in Armenia, that “genocide” is a “defining issue” for Armenians, is an expression of reality that must be accepted. Surely, the 1915 events have been tragic for Armenians, and there is no denying that. The same host’s pronouncement that, “Armenia is looking to normalize relations with Turkey, not because of the genocide but despite the genocide,” and that “We also need to go beyond victimization,” are also signs that give a measure of hope.

The recent statement from Armenia’s acting Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, that Armenia is ready for normalization talks with Turkey, is also an encouraging sign.

<https://news.am/eng/news/478858.html>

But for a meaningful and durable reconciliation concrete steps, not mere words, from the Armenian side are needed. There is little doubt that Turkey would like to make peace with its Armenian neighbor if only constant drumbeats of unfounded “genocide” accusations stop, and Armenians confront their own past fairly and squarely. Just in the case of doing tango, it takes two to reconcile. The genocide accusations are sowing seeds of anti-Turkish hatred in many young Armenians, that render any future reconciliation even more difficult. The 1915 events were tragic for both sides, a fact the two sides should openly regret, but without bitterness and recrimination. Then the two sides can move on to the 21<sup>st</sup> century and beyond.

For Turks, the dissolution and dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire before and during World War-I was more than a “defining



**Mevlana Celaleddin Rumi'nin ölüm yıldönümü programı**  
**The death anniversary program of Mevlana Jalaleddin Rumi**  
**Ջելալեդդին Ռումիի մահուան տարելիցը: Ուր հանդես եկան՝**

**Photo 6:** Revnak Women's Sufi Music Group performing at Ortaköy Surp Asdvadzadzin Armenian Church, 2014.

issue,” but Turks have left the past behind and moved on. Turkey has made peace with its WW-I adversaries, and there is no inherent animosity among Turks against the old adversaries. Currently there are about 60 thousand citizens of Armenian origin in Turkey – plus a large contingent of illegal workers from across the border – freely exercising their faith and customs. In contrast, not a single Turkish soul lives in Armenia.

A change in mentality across the border seems in order.

Putting it in larger perspective, if the Germans could made peace with the British, the French and the Russians in the wakes of WW-I and WW-II, why can't Turks and Armenians do the same after more than a century?

In conclusion, Mr Bourdain, instead of reciting from the Armenian genocide playbook, and exploiting Christian bigotries against Turks and Muslims, could have accomplished something positive if had researched the subject and learned the other side of the dispute. He could have counseled his Armenian

hosts to stop using unfounded accusations and fakeries to vilify Turks, and be more open-minded. A good start for reconciliation would be an expression of regret for the killing of 44 Turkish diplomats by the ASALA/JCAG terrorist organization in recent past.

While the expression “Western Armenia” in reference to parts of eastern Turkey, included in Armenia's 1990 Declaration of Independence, is not found in Constitution of 1995 with Amendments through 2005, the discontinuance of the use of this phrase by the ARF-minded Diaspora Armenians, conjuring up a “lost territory,” would also be a positive step.

Strangely enough, southern Turkey (Şanlıurfa), where the world-renowned pre-historic temple Göbeklitepe is located, is lately being referred to at some Armenian websites as “Southern Armenia,” with the claim that the temple was built by “ancient Armenians.” There is little doubt that such opportunism by the Armenian side will not help Turkey-Armenia relations.

Armenia should also honor the 2008

UN General Assembly resolution on the Nagorno-Karabakh issue. Some 20% of the Azeri territory is under occupation by Armenia.

If such steps are taken, then the lavishing words heard in Bourdain-the-food-guru's program for a special meat dish with rice called “haşlama” will likely conjure up pleasant memories of a long-gone era when Turks and the “*Millet-i Sadıka*” Armenians lived together in peace and harmony.

Not to mention that, events such as the one that took place at the Ortaköy Surp Asdvadzadzin Armenian Church in Istanbul in 2014, with the Revnak Women's Sufi Music Group reciting divine hymns, “*La İlahe İllallah ... Allah-ü Ekber,*” evoking Islamic mysticism and tolerance in commemoration of Mevlana Celeleddin Rumi, give further hope of Turkish-Armenian reconciliation (photo-6). In human conflicts, mutual understanding and tolerance could be very effective for reconciliation.

Post script: This article is dedicated to the memory of Mr. Şükrü S. Aya, who, almost like a “one-man army,” and purely motivated to tell the truth, spent many years selflessly trying to disprove “Armenian genocide” allegations. In addition to giving lectures and writing articles, Aya authored 4 books and co-authored one on the Armenian issue, all based on foreign sources. Originally a Turkish businessman, Mr. Aya, age 89, passed away on January 26, 2019 in Istanbul, just before this article went to press.

About the author: Ferruh Demirmen, an earth scientist by profession (M.S., Ph.D., Stanford Univ.), and now retired, is keenly interested in the Turkish-Armenian relations, and has lectured and written extensively on the subject.