

THE TRUTH WILL SET US FREE




ARMENIANS AND TURKS RECONCILED

GEORGE JERJIAN

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*To Tigran
with best
wishes* 

*London
25.11.03*

GEORGE JERJIAN



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“There are few higher callings than exposing historic lies that stifle personal liberty and economic progress. Jerjian rises to the task, exposing the truth and discovering painful truths about his own family’s past. In this eloquently written and powerfully argued book, he shows that the simple and plain truth is neither simple nor plain. Read this book if you want to understand why progress is a mirage in this part of the world.”

*Hirair Hovnanian, Chairman, Armenian Assembly
of America, Washington DC*

“George Jerjian not only gives the readers a meaningful insight into one of most troubling episodes of the grim history of the 20th century, but also builds up a challenging and optimistic scenario regarding the future of the region. Reading Jerjian’s admirable book one is reminded of a quote from Herman Kahn, the founding father of scenario methodology, who once noted: “History is likely to write scenarios that most observers would find implausible not only prospectively, but sometimes, even in

“George Jerjian has found a persuasive and engaging combination in *The Truth Will Set Us Free*. Against the backdrop of a lively retelling of his own family’s experience of the time, his ability to compress historical detail clarifies the legal case for recognizing the Armenian genocide. Most importantly, he is brave enough to imagine a way forward post-recognition, where Turks and Armenians are reconciled and working together to help re-create a new, much-improved version of the old Near eastern mosaic. Jerjian must be congratulated for daring to dream and for having the courage to stir debate in the public forum.”

*Dr Susan Pattie, Senior Research Fellow
(Anthropology), University College London*

“In recounting his family’s survival of the Armenian genocide and the compelling arguments for recognition, George Jerjian provides a fascinating proposal for reconciliation between Armenians and Turks that will spawn justice to the peoples of both lands.”

*Dr Levon Chorbajian, Professor of Sociology,
University of Massachusetts Lowell*

Whatever our nationality, we all carry some horrors in our historical baggage. My country Britain was, for example, a leader in the slave

trade. As George Jerjian says in this timely book, only by facing up to the past and laying to rest its ghosts can we build a future together in peace, prosperity and confidence, with that enjoyment of unity in diversity, which is the embodiment of the European dream.

Baroness Sarah Ludford MEP

To Talyn, for enduring the “truth” with a smile

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Foreword

In the spring of 1945, while serving in the US Army in Italy, I was hit by Nazi machine gun fire. I survived with a shattered right shoulder and paralyzed from the neck down. It took nearly three years and many operations to take care of all my problems. In these trying years, the people of Russell, Kansas my hometown, stood by me both financially and spiritually and I never forgot what that help meant.

Then I met Hampar Kelikian – Dr K to his friends. An Armenian immigrant, who lost his family in the 1915 genocide, Kelikian was a pioneer in the surgical restoration of otherwise useless limbs. Dr K was frank to say that after that, it would be up to me to make the most of what I had. There would be no miracles, he added. But he was wrong. Dr K himself was a miracle. He would not take a penny for any of the operations and did the same for many young veterans coming back from the war who could not afford the medical care they needed. So, you can imagine how I cherished the friendship of Dr Kelikian.

I know Dr K would have been proud of George Jerjian's splendid book *The Truth Will Set Us Free: Armenians and Turks Reconciled*, because like him, George is also a pioneer; a pioneer in the complex restoration of relations between the Armenians and Turks.

*Former Senator Bob Dole
Washington DC, March 2003*

Preface

The purpose of this book is to share three separate, but inter-linked stories with Armenians, Turks and other nations, who share an interest in the resolution of the Armenian genocide and reconciliation between Armenians and Turks. The book is divided into three parts, all of which can stand on their own, but together form a journey of honor, truth and hope.

Part I is about duty to country and honor to friends. In it, I narrate my grandmother's story, in which an "honorable" Turk saves her and her family. Although I did not know at the time I started this book or even when I had finished writing the first draft, I discovered from the acclaimed genocide scholar, Professor Vahakn Dadrian, that this Turk was listed in the British Foreign Office archives as one of 144 high-ranking Ottoman officials responsible for the annihilation of Armenians. You will discover that the simple and plain truth is neither simple nor plain.

Part II is about truth. Truth is agreement with reality. Truth is being accurate, genuine and honest. Truth is not negotiable. In it, I share the compelling evidence of an Armenian professor, who unearths new and very credible evidence of Armenocide by Ottoman Turkey. I share the findings of a Turkish scholar, who implicates the Turkish Republic in covering up this genocide and an American journalist, a Turcophile, who reveals why he believes the Turks are stuck in a time warp, from which they are unable to emerge.

Part III is about hope. In it, I create a vision of the future, of possibilities, of opportunities. This vision is entirely mine and it is fluid and not written in stone. It does not represent the vision of the Armenian Republic nor of any Armenian Diaspora institution or groups. It is simply meant to start a conversation among and between Armenians and Turks. A note of caution to our fellow compatriots, our friends in the legislatures of the United States and the European Union and to our Turkish detractors, this book is not a call for disengagement from the issue of recognition of the Armenian genocide. On the contrary, it is a call to double our efforts in order to reach a goal, which is recognition and then reconciliation.

The Turkish Armenian Reconciliation Commission (TARC), formed in July 2001 by Turkish and Armenian civil society representatives, requested the International Center for Transitional Justice (ICTJ) to facilitate an independent legal study on whether the 1948 Genocide Convention applied to the events in Eastern Anatolia in 1915. On 4 February 2003, ICTJ declared, “The events, viewed collectively, can be said to include all of the elements of the crime of genocide as defined in the Convention, and legal scholars as well as historians, politicians, journalists and other people would be justified in continuing to so describe them.”

Will this be enough to reach reconciliation? No. Armenians will need to overcome their high expectations of what Turkish recognition of the genocide will mean and in turn, the Turks will need to overcome the serious limitations of their high school history syllabus. Reconciliation can only take place when truth and truce are declared. What happened cannot be undone, but we need not be prisoners of the past. The truth will set us – Armenian and Turk – free.

Lastly, it shows that while the truth is not negotiable, the terms of reconciliation are.

Turks and Armenians need a new vision; a new vision to demolish the wall; a new vision for a new century.

G E J

London, June 2003

The story of Cain and Abel

(This story is found not only in The Old Testament book of Genesis, chapter 4, but also in the Koran, "The Dinner Table", verses 5:27–5:32.)

Now Adam had marital relations with his wife Eve, and she became pregnant and gave birth to Cain. Then she said, "I have created a man just as the LORD did!" Then she gave birth to his brother Abel. Abel took care of the flocks, while Cain cultivated the ground.

At the designated time, Cain brought some of the fruit of the ground for an offering to the Lord. But Abel brought some of the firstborn of his flock – even the fattest of them. And the Lord was pleased with Abel and his offering, but with Cain and his offering he was not pleased. So Cain became very angry, and his expression was downcast.

Then the Lord said to Cain, "Why are you angry,