



## The Forgotten Genocide of the Greeks of Asia Minor

*George Mavropoulos*

The Armenians are not the only subject people in Turkey which have suffered from this policy of making Turkey exclusively the country of the Turks. The story which I have told about the Armenians I could also tell with certain modifications about the Greeks and Syrians(Assyrians). Indeed, the Greeks were the first victims of the nationalizing idea."

*Henry Morgenthau: US Ambassador to Turkey (1913-1916)*

In this new age of instant information and 24-hour news cycles with their "up-to-the-minute" news accounts, it is mind numbing to realize that the world continues to witness mass human atrocities that, barely register the outcry they deserve. "Never Again" is happening now.

Today, the world is witnessing ethnic cleansing, massacres, deportations, and violence against minorities in the Middle East. History is repeating itself. One hundred years ago, during the decline of the Ottoman Empire through the deliberate and systematic policy of "Turkey for Turks," approximately 3 million Armenians, Assyrians, and Greeks were murdered or were victims of the "white death."<sup>1</sup>

The years spanning from the Young Turkish Revolution (1908) to the collapse of the Ottoman Empire (1918) and the establishment of the Republic of Turkey (1923) were characterized by a number of processes whose primary and final aim was the creation of a modern Turkish Muslim national state. That nationalist state would succeed the multi-ethnic and multi-religious Ottoman Empire. These years were marked, on one hand, by the massive destruction of the empire's national consciousness, and on the other hand, by the massive destruction of the empire's indigenous Christian peoples, primarily Armenians, Assyrians/Arameans, and Greeks. The genocidal experiences of these three peoples took place in the same country, during the same period, as part of the same

historical, social, economic, and political forces, involving a continuity of perpetrators with the same motive of ridding the area of its Christian population.

The genocide of the Ottoman Greeks was most intense for about ten years. From roughly 1913 to 1923, three thousand years of history and an ancient culture were wiped out. At the beginning of and after World War I, out of more than 2.5 million Greeks living in the Ottoman Empire (Asia Minor, Pontos, and Eastern Thrace), as many as 1 million perished, and over 1.25 million were uprooted prior to and during the forced population exchange between Greece and Turkey.

The uprooting and genocide of the Greeks was completed by the Turkish nationalists with the deliberate destruction and holocaust of Smyrna on September 13, 1922.<sup>2</sup> What occurred at Smyrna is beyond imagination. An eye-witness, F. W. Bunter, a medical officer on the British Royal Navy hospital ship HMS Maine, wrote at the time, "The carnage and cruelty to the Greek civilians is indescribable.

The crimes committed by the late Ottoman Empire and the Republic of Turkey before, during, and after WWI, constitute the first massive destruction in the modern period of citizens by their own government. The subsequent destruction of European Jewry (the Shoah) during WWII mimicked the methods used by the Turks against the Asia Minor ethnic groups. Hitler has been quoted as saying, "After all, who remembers what was done to the Armenians." What is very clear is the Nazi admiration for the acts of Turkey that we now call crimes against humanity, genocide, and ethnic cleansing.<sup>3</sup>

Armenians have vigorously pursued a series of efforts to inform the public, academics, and politicians about the Armenian Genocide. The Turkish government has deliberately denied that genocide ever happened. But that has not stopped other governments from acknowledging that the Armenian Genocide indeed occurred.

To this day, the Turkish government continues to threaten its marginalized Armenian and Greek minority populations by promoting ethnic hatred, bigotry and by confiscating church properties. Brutal attacks on the Greeks occurred in the 1950s and again in the 1960s.<sup>4</sup> In its bid to implement an aggressive campaign of genocide denial, Turkey pays millions of dollars pro-Turkish lobbyists and public relations firms operating in the United States.

The Assyrians and Greeks have only recently begun to compile the relevant documentation and scholarship that will bolster their claims of the atrocities to which their peoples were subjected.<sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, the documentation already in hand of the deportations, rape, exposure to harsh conditions on forced marches from their homelands, and outright massacres meet the internationally agreed on definition of genocide.<sup>6</sup>

The goal of the Asia Minor and Pontos Hellenic Research Center and the PanPontian Federation of US and Canada is to have the genocide of the Greeks recognized by the United Nations and the US Congress. We call on President Trump to initiate a policy to convince Turkey to recognize the genocide of the Greeks of Asia Minor and Pontos during the years 1913-1923. We ask the US Congress to join other nations in recognizing the genocides. At the very least, we ask President Trump to issue a statement in support of the claims of the descendants of the dead and displaced Greeks of Asia Minor. We are also calling on the President and US Congress to ensure that U.S. foreign policy reflects appropriate understanding and sensitivity concerning these issues and the consequences of the failure to realize a just resolution. The Greek Americans who are now well-placed in the new Trump administration need to stand up for their religious and ethnic heritage.

---

<sup>1</sup> This term was used in a "Report of the protests of the Locum Tenens of the Greek Patriarch and the Armenian Patriarch" sent to the British High Commission in Constantinople, Oct. 18, 1919. It indicates that Christians could not live without cultivating their lands, but their fields were well outside the villages. The villagers could not go to them due to threats from the Turkish military.

<sup>2</sup> Constantine G. Hatzidimitriou (ed.). *American Accounts Documenting the Destruction of Smyrna by the Kemalist Turkish Forces, September 1922*. NY: Melissa International, 2005.

<sup>3</sup> Stefan Ihrig. *Ataturk in the Nazi Imagination*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014.

<sup>4</sup> Speros Vryonis, *The Mechanism of Catastrophe: The Turkish Pogrom of September 6-7, 1955, and the Destruction of the Greek Community of Istanbul*. New York: Greekworks, 2005.

<sup>5</sup> George G. Shirinian. *The Asia Minor Catastrophe and the Ottoman Greek Genocide*. Bloomington, IL: The Asia Minor and Pontos Hellenic Research Center, 2012.

<sup>6</sup> Tess Hoffmann, Matthias Bjornlund, Vasileios Meichanetsidis (eds.). *The Genocide of the Ottoman Greeks*. NY: Aristide D. Caratzas, 2011.

---

**The AHIF Policy Journal** | copyright © 2017 American Hellenic Institute Foundation, Inc.

All rights reserved. All articles appearing in the AHIF Policy Journal are the copyright of the Journal. The online edition is free to individuals and institutions. Copies of the individual articles are strictly prohibited. Reproduction, storage or transmission of this work in any form or by any means beyond that permitted by Sections 107 and 108 of the U.S. Copyright Law is unlawful without prior permission in writing of the publisher, or in accordance with the terms of licenses issued by the Copyright Clearance Center (CCC) and other organizations authorized by the publisher to administer reprographic reproduction rights. Distribution of the published articles for research or educational purposes is possible, but requires the formal authorization of the Journal editor and the authors. Commercial use of the AHIF Policy Journal or the articles contained herein is expressly prohibited without the written consent of the Managing Editor at AHIFPolicyJournal@aheworld.org. AHIF 1220 16th Street NW, Washington, DC 20036.