

A lecture by Professor of History Dr. K. Photiadis on the Genocide of Pontian Greek Hellenism (1914-1923) on May 29, 2005 was given at the Church of the Holy Trinity in Chicago, Illinois.

The lecture that was given in Greek has been translated by Professor Eleni Phufas for the Pontian Greek Society of Chicago.

On Sunday the 29th of May the Committee of Pontian Greeks in Chicago, "Xeniteas", held a memorial for the Genocide of Pontian Hellenism (1914-1923) at the Church of the Holy Trinity. Instead of the designated date of May 19, the memorial was held on the 29th of May which is the day of the subjugation of the City (Constantinople, May 29, 1453).

Present at the memorial, was the Professor of History of The Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. Dr. Constantine Photiadis. After the memorial, Dr. Photiadis gave a speech about the historic day of the subjugation of the city and about the 19th of May in memory of the Genocide of the Pontian Greek people. Attending the ceremony were representatives of organizations, friends, and many fellow countrymen and women.

On behalf of the Organization "Xeniteas" the President of the Committee Kyriakos Stergiou thanked the Reverend Pastor Kaloudis of the Holy Trinity parish for their willingness and support, and Chancellor Dimitrios, representative of the Chicago Archdiocese.

Upon welcoming and thanking all the fellow countrymen and women, the President made the following observation:

"Today we are happy and proud because we have among us the honored professor of history of The Aristotle University of Thessaloniki Dr. Konstantinos Photiadis who for many years researched and wrote the history of and documented the genocide of the Pontian Greek People. After ten years of systematic research of the records at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Europe, in public and private research centers and institutes, at refugee organizations and institutes, published his great project on the subject of the genocide of the Pontian Greek people which includes 14 massive volumes of 800 pages, 200 illustrated maps and 100 photographs."

Excerpts from the speech of Dr. Photiadis:

The 19th of May Dr. Photiadis said, has been established since 1994, by law of the Greek Parliament as a day of memory of the Genocide of the Greeks of Pontos. Eighty years have passed since the era of the catastrophe, the genocide, the uprooting and the forced expulsions. Until today, we have not dared to look into the face of the tragedy of Hellenism. We did not show the deeper causes that led Hellenism of Asia Minor to its death. We cooperated, caged by the State and its ideological mechanisms, in the disdain of our history. Only demonstrations of memorials, in other words we celebrated the approval of the death certificate of memory. At the historical dissolution of the Pontian Hellenism, a definitive role was played by the political climate of our native Greece which was always inimical and at the same time repressive. The expulsions, the Greek - Turkish friendship pact of Venizelos and Inonu, dictatorship, the Second World War, The Civil War, the foreign domination by the junta during its seven years, did not permit the revealing of the dangers "to the established class" white pages of our modern history.

δεν επέτρεψαν την ανάδειξη επικίνδυνων "δια την καθεστηκυία τάξιν" λευκών σελίδων της σύγχρονης ιστορίας μας.

Today, Dr. Photiadis continued, at the mere mention of the work Genocide our thoughts automatically focus on two tragic events of the 20th century. The genocide of the Armenians in 1915 at the hands of the Young Turks and the genocide of the Jews and Slavic peoples from 1940-44 by the Germans. In the 20th century genocidal crimes against other peoples took place and even continue to take place in our contemporary era which the new order has deliberately downplayed and continues to downplay in importance. One of these Peoples that has suffered all the techniques and forms of genocidal methods, and specifically by the same militaristic establishment which is responsible for the Holocaust of the Armenian people, the disappearance of the Kurdish ethnicity, the crushing of the Greeks of Constantinople, Imbros and Tenedos and the division of Cyprus, is also the Greek people of Pontos.

The Genocide of the Greeks of Pontos, contrary to what happened to the Armenians, was overshadowed by the massive amount of tragic circumstances of the Armenian people or because of the concurrent events, or was silenced by state and diplomatic orders in the name of international agreements and interests. The genocidal design of the Young Turks was intended in its first phase against the disappearance of all Christian ethnicities and second, the Turkification of Muslim ethnicities.

In his article in the newspaper *Tzoumhurrieyet* on the 14 of May 1994 the Turkish academician Galin Oktem wonders “Why did the Greeks select 19th of May as the Memorial Day of the Genocide the, the same day that we Turks celebrate as the ‘Celebration of Youth and Athletics’...They continue still to live as organs of the imperialists with the pain that their design have not been realized.”

In reply, representatives of the ethnicities of Asia Minor respond to these forced problematic issues who continue to endure the political Turkification policy of the military government of the post Kemalist state.

The response, said Dr. Photiadis, is also given by the Turks themselves:

In a front page article in *Atilim*, a newspaper of Samsun, on the 22 of May 1999 the editor maintains that the appearance of Mustafa Kemal in Samsun on the 19th of May 1919 among the mosaic of ethnicities in Asia Minor, was accompanied by the burial of another nation of Greeks of Pontos at the cemetery of nations... Mustafa Kemal commences the ethnic cleansing by organizing and mobilizing the Turks, who comprised a minority, against the Pontian people...From Samsun he goes to Havza where he secretly meets Osman Agha, whom he mobilizes against the Christian Pontian people.

The magazine called *Kaldirac* of the Turkish Left of Constantinople in an article dedicated to the 19th of May and the events of the Pontian proceedings of assimilation maintains that: On May 19th the pervasive Ottoman ideology sent Mustafa Kemal who established a new assimilation policy, founded on the vast genocides, with the objective to deal with the Pontian movement. He gathered a unit of Tsetes irregulars whose hands are blood soaked. He promoted Osman Agha and other unrepentant criminals who continued on to the massive holocausts so as to totally wipe out the Pontian people.

Characteristic are the words of Eichmann when Topal Osman asked Kemal for his assistance as they pertain to the Pontian Greek people:

“Do not worry at all my dear Pasha. As long as I have your support I will provide such an “incense” to the Greeks of Pontos that they will drown like hornets in caves.”

The 19th of May is Good Friday for the Greeks of Pontos and all of Asia Minor. It is also the day of ethnic cleansing, the ethnic and cultural identity of many Muslim ethnicities which resisted and continue to resist the political Turkification of the Kemalist and post Kemalist state.

Pontian Hellenism failed just as the Armenian people have failed, to fit into the categories which are referred to in the Treaty of the United Nations as acts of Genocide.

The bloody “red” butchery of the Armenian people was completed by the “white” butchery of the Greek people of Pontos, the delayed extermination from ill treatment, forced displacement (also called deracination), exile, forced labor battalions, the coldness, the extended lack of water and food, imprisonment in dungeons, in cells so small that you could not stand up straight inside.

Throughout Pontos, Death held sway in his most awful nature.

The Mothers’ scream in a couplet:

“Don’t cry my baby,

don’t cry my little bird

You make me cry too

Your father is in exile and

You are the only one I have left,”

fully conveys the climate of tragic circumstances that befell the Greeks.

Throughout the Pontos region death reigned in his most hideous forms. From Russia, the Greek Embassy in St. Petersburg informed the Ministry of Foreign Affairs about the tragic circumstances of the inhabitants in the region of Trapezon: "...On the 15th of April the inhabitants of 16 villages in the district of Vazelonos, in the region of Trapezon, all Greek, were ordered by the Turkish military command to leave to the interior of Argyropolis and fearful that they would be killed

on the way in the same way that the Armenians were killed, abandoned their homes and escaped into the forests hoping to save themselves on the rapid advance of the Russian army into the country. In these circumstances, from among the 6000 arrivals, 650 escaped into the monastery of Vazelonos where there were another 1500 refugees from Trapezon. Another 1200 arrived in the great cave of the village called "Kounaka" and the rest were scattered in the upper forest caves into various other safe havens. Emptied of their dwellers, the homes of these villages were plundered and the lands and possessions confiscated by the Turkish army. Those hidden in the Kounaka cave were forced by hunger to surrender upon a signal. From among these, 26 women and young girls rape threw themselves into the nearby river by the village of Yefira in order to escape, and despite attempts at rescue by some, drowned...".

During the time that Topal Osman along with his volunteer Tsetes were attempting to ethnically cleanse the Greeks, Mustafa Kemal by order of the sultan and in his rank as commander of the 9th army was setting off on the 16th of May 1919 for Samsun in order to protect the Greeks and Armenians from the Turkish allies, the Tsetes. Mustafa Kemal along with 21 friends reached the port of Samsun on the 19th of May 1919. When Topal Osman was informed of the desire of Mustafa Kemal to meet with him, he took his closest collaborators and went to Havza, The first meeting of acquaintance between Topal Osman and Mustafa Kemal was accomplished on the 29th of May 1919 in Havza.

The discussion among the organizers of the Pontian Greek Genocide went, in general, according to the Turkish Historiographer Sener Cemal in the following way: "Mustafa Kemal: I see that you were a patriot since your youth. Do you adhere to your ideals that you set into place from then even now? We have to struggle until our nation is freed and until there are no more internal or external enemies. You will defend the towns and cities of the Black sea region. From a disorganized and untrained force your cabal will become a battalion. The leader of this battalion will become you. We will supply you with brave young officers... With the passage of time, and once we have proof that they committed illegal acts. we will exterminate them all.

Topal Osman: Do not worry at all my Pasha! As long as I have your support I will provide such an “incense” to the Greeks of Pontos that they will drown like hornets in caves.”

The reporter of the newspaper *Daily Telegraph*, discussing the Kemalist expulsions of the Greek population and the butcheries of Asia Minor at Trapezounta in 1919 writes that: “The present expulsions and the slaughters in Asia Minor have no precedent in Turkish history. They surpass in importance those of the days of Gladstone and even those that were implemented in 1915.”

Mustafa Kemal and the post Kemalist authorities cannot be proud of their liberation movement when it is based on predatory and murderous gangs such as those of Topal Osman’s. They cannot justify their actions by claiming that they did not know they were committing genocide because Murat Yuksel writes that: “No one was listening to the appeals and complaints of the unfortunate residents of Kerasounda. No one was paying any attention to their accusations. The record of grievances in the Court of Justice was full of complaints against Topal Osman. However, a secret power not only hid Topal Osman but also every murder and every legal action against him helped him to rise even higher in the hierarchy of power. He was the superior officer of Kerasounda, and he was everything. Like a puppet master, nothing happened without his knowledge or consent. He gave orders, forbidding, hanging, slaughtering. No one said a word.

The fact that the crimes of the Kemalists of 1921 were acknowledged by some members of the upper class of the Ottoman society is very significant and presents a direct link to this matter. The most important multi paged analytical accusation is by Djemal Nouzhet, the legal advisor of the Garrison of Constantinople and President of the Investigation Committee.

In his treatise he writes about the slaughters of Greeks in Pontos in the Kemalist-controlled region by the local authorities and organized bandits. “The area by the coast of the Black Sea had a Greek element, hard working and controllers of commerce, a wealthy area, and happened to be the best producers of this region.”

The sentencing and hanging of all the religious, cultural and political leadership in the central square of Amasia was a deliberately planned genocidal act which even former allies now more

recently friendly and sympathetic to the Kemalist government, nations such as France and Italy and all other European nations, were forced to condemn.

The above named nations were forced to take a stand quite possibly due to the demonstrations of support to the suffering Pontian Greek people by different organizations, religious and cultural institutions, with the participation as well of intellectuals of Europe and America, and the named complaints and vote of protest of their Greek colleagues as well . “Greek writers and artists directed their voices towards the intellectuals of Europe and America the following protest: With the deepest of distress the writers and artists of Greece direct themselves towards the intellectuals of the civilized world informing them of the tragedy of thousands of families of the Greek Pontian world.

Dismal, factually correct, and indisputable the events are the following:

The Turks murdered all and every single one of the residents of the city of Merzifond after they had looted and set it ablaze. Those who attempted to save themselves were shot and killed as they rushed into the alleys.

They removed all the male population of the cities of Tripolis, Kerasounda, Ordous, Oinoi, Amisos, and Pafras, and on the way slaughtered most of them.

Inside a church in the village of Elezli en Soulou-Tere they locked up 535 Greeks and butchered those leaving only 4 alive. First they clubbed 7 priests to death in front of the entrance of the church In Amasia they hanged 168 notables from Amisos and Pafras.

They raped all of the females, the virgins and the children of the upper villages and the most beautiful of virgins and young men they locked up in the harems. They butchered many infants by hurling them against the walls.

The undersigned brings the above to the awareness of intellectuals of Europe and America and believing that not only these events but also the toleration of these constitutes the sorrow of humanity.

Athens, November 22, 1921

Anninos, Ch., Avyeris M., Vlahoyiannis I., Vokos Ger., Griparis I., Douzas A., Drosinis G., Zahos A., Theodoropoulou A., Theotokis K., Iakovidis D., Kazantzakis N., Kazantzaki Gal., Kambanis Ar., Kambouroglous D., Karolidis P., Kokkinos D., Koromilas G., Malakasis M., Maleas K., Menandros S., Nikoloudis Th., Nirvanas P., Ksenopoulos Gr., Palamas K., Papantoniou Z., Parashos K., Pasayiannis K., Politis F., Pop G., Sikelianos Ag., Skipis S., Stratiyis G., Tagopoulos D., Tsokopoulos G., Fylliras R., Hadzidakis G., Hadzopoulos D., Horn P., Svoronos I.

The writer in the newspaper *The Morning Post* in his article says: “All the atrocities that were committed by Nero, Caligula, Attila, and Abdul Hamid, are lost in non existence when compared to the thousands who were murdered deliberately in Turkey during the four previous years. Included among the victims are foreign enemies, prisoners of war, Armenians, Greeks, Arabs, etc. They could not have been any worse except if genuine demons had this matter in their hands and even then I doubt if they could have committed more ghastly acts. This was the response given by Pastor Frew, whose work as the head of the British Relief Board brought him in close touch with the imprisoned.”

Anxious, and in opposition to the harsh measures of the Kemalist government towards the Greeks, there were also some Kemalist deputies especially in the region of Pontos who were charged by their colleague the deputy of Prousa Emin Bey at the conference of the 21st of August 1922 as “adherents of the Pontian ideals” and were summoned to a committee of inquiry regarding their moderate positions and passive stands.

At the Turkish National Assembly the deputy from Sinoe, Hakki Hami Bey, who energetically differentiated the measures of displacement taken by the government, particularly distinguished himself. In his remarks he emphasized; “Our faces will forever be scarred because of the forced displacements. If the displacements are being made in order to murder innocent lives, gentlemen, that is an extremely abhorrent measure. We are stained by the whole world. So why then cannot the government defend itself... I saw it with my own eyes. Such evil acts have been committed that the evil acts which are committed by our employees not even the British commit...”

Following him, on the same subject, the Deputy from Kirsehir, Yiahya Galip, took the podium, and said: "...The Pontian matter had started much earlier... We were hearing that the Pontians would gather an organization would establish a government would do this and that but we had not heard about the disappearance of the problem by the displacement of individuals... Gentlemen, you must be sure that whatever evil has sprung up, has been sprung up by the emergency authorities which they provided. I do not understand that which will correct the nation are the laws and that which will destroy it is criminality. Emergency authority means that whatever one wants to do - hang, kill, people destroy cities destroy houses that he finds in front of him abandoning the universe in a catastrophe.

Because the individuals who occupy themselves (with the repression) in order to not give an account for those who rob, torch the homes... Out of those who created the Pontian matter and of those who provoked the evil with Pontos, there were greater losses among us...with the excuse of the displacement of the Pontians, they destroyed the life and materials things of the villages...I want all to be witnesses that I do not agree with the displacement of anyone. Exile is a bomb for the nation. It is terrible. How many years hence will we pay for this...The criminals should be brought to the courts just like the innocents."

In the same spirit during his speech the deputy of Mersini, Salahatin Bey spoke: "...Could it be the desire of the national assembly that no non Muslims remain, even the last one to be exiled and to disappear? In such a situation how will we exist in this world? Will we be able to survive? Excuse me, but the arrangement of this problem constitutes our national life."

It is time, I believe, for international organizations which were established in order to protect international peace, to act. To promote justice according to the spirit and laws of the Charter of the United Nations, and respect for the foundations of human principles. It is essential that an incorruptible committee of inquiry should be assembled by the High Court of Human Rights in order to bring to light the tragic events of that era supported by the existing documents. The request of the

Pontian Greek people for the recognition of the Genocide constitutes a dynamic message of salvation for the Turkish nation as well.

The terrible genocide against the Jewish People and the Slavic people was committed by Germany during the Second World War. However, that nation asked for forgiveness and atonement by the relatives of the victims, paid reparations and continue to emphasize to this day its responsibility for that event.

If Modern day Turkey wants to be called a European nation, since it strives to become member of the European Union, it would do well to follow the German example. It should acknowledge its many genocides which it committed and continues to commit. It should ask forgiveness for these and provide assurances to the world community and to its own people that it will never commit them again. Only in this way will it liberate the soul and conscience of the Young Turk generation from its guilty conscience which it is persecuted by and prevents it from assimilating the great values of European civilization.

The Greek Parliament ought to establish a commission, and with the cooperation of University foundations, Refugee Associations, and other ethnicities of Asia Minor who suffered from comparable genocides, promote the subject of the recognition of the Genocides.

The policy of Greek resistance to modern Turkish expansion begins with the recognition of the Pontian Genocide. The message of the Pontian intellectual and politician Michael Haralambidis that "Without the recognition of genocide Pontians do not have a history" should become the possession and watchword of all of us.

May 19th should be declared in its historical place, one that is fitting by the State, the academic community and the Greek Diaspora. The struggle for justice is not only a matter for the Pontian people. We all must be Pontians, just as we all are Cretans, Moreans (Peloponnesians), Cypriots, Macedonians, Aegeans, Thracians and Mainland Greeks.