MUSTAFA KEMAL ATATÜRK (1881-1938)

Posted on April 28, 2025 by Keghart



Category: Opinions

Greek Genocide Resource Center.

Mustafa Kemal 'Atatürk' was the consummator of the Greek Genocide. He was born in 1881 in Thessaloniki, Greece (then part of the Ottoman Empire). He attended the Ottoman Military School in Constantinople and graduated in 1905. Around 1908 he joined the Committee for Union and Progress (CUP) party. Kemal was an officer of the Turkish Army and founded the Turkish Nationalist Movement (the Kemalists) by regrouping the Ottoman Army, irregular fighters and the remnants of the CUP. He continued the genocidal policy engineered by the Committee for Union and Progress.

Historian Mark Levene, in his journal titled *Creating a Modern Zone of Genocide*, stated:

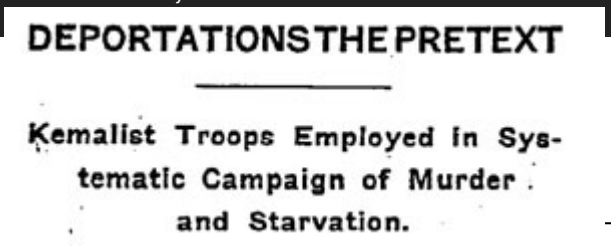
...the CUP committed genocide in order to transform the residual empire into a streamlined, homogeneous nation-state on the European model. Once the CUP had started the process, the Kemalists, freed from any direct European pressure by the 1918 defeat and capitulation of Germany, went on to complete it, achieving what nobody believed possible: the reassertion of independence and sovereignty via an exterminatory war of national liberation.[1]

Native Greeks were persecuted throughout Ottoman Turkey under the command of Mustapha Kemal. Between 1919-1923, media reports, accounts from missionaries, foreign diplomats and survivor testimonies describe a systematic campaign of persecution against the native Greeks of the Empire. On the 11th of November 1919, the British High Commissioner to Turkey Admiral de Robeck reported:

...the Christians are now bewildered and terrified... Every district has its band of brigands now posing as patriots, and even in the vicinity of Constantinople robbery under arms is of daily ocurrence, the principal victims being naturally the unprotected Christian villagers. Behind all these elements of disorder stands Mustapha Kemal...[2]

On the 6th of August 1921, the Maryborough Chronicle reported that Kemalists were rounding up and massacring Greek subjects at Trabzon (formerly Trebizond).[3] On the 22nd of March 1921, The Journal (Adelaide) reported on a three day massacre of Christians by the Kemalists at Kayseri (formerly Caesarea).[4]

On the 14th of June 1922, the New York Times reported on the Kemalists' "systematic campaign of murder and starvation" and described how 15,000 Greek men, women and children from the district of Rhodopolis (north-eastern Anatolia) were massacred. It also reported how the Greeks of Didyma (formerly Geronta) had been deported to the interior toward Mugla, some 130 km away. It also mentioned how an Italian physician of the Red Cross, Dr Dalalio saw with his own eyes, atrocities committed in the town of Fethiye (formerly Macri) and the deportation of all males from the ages of 12-85 to Funjah and Malatya.[5]


DEPORTATIONS THE PRETEXT

Kemalist Troops Employed in Systematic Campaign of Murder and Starvation.

The New York Times, 14 June 1922. Read

The Armenian-Greek Section (AGS) was formed following the First World War by the British High Commission in Constantinople to implement the terms of the Armistice particularly with regard to Greek and Armenian issues. At the meeting of 29 September 1920, the AGS reported that a large band of Kemalist Nationalists led by a certain Djemal, surrounded the Greek quarter of Iznik (Gr: Nicaea) and seized the entire population numbering about 600 and massacred them. No survivors were found.[6]

On the 5th of July 1920, 120 Kemalists and 600 Turkish residents surrounded and pillaged the four villages at Findikli (formerly Foundouklia) near Adapazari. They collected 7,800 sheep and all cattle belonging to Christians. The men were shut up in a church and the women exiled. The men were then ordered to come out in groups of five and were shot. Out of the population of 3,400, 400 men were murdered and 30 of the women were exiled. The rest of the population fled to the mountains.[7]

Aside from persecuting Greeks in villages and towns, Mustafa Kemal also established special tribunals or Courts of Independence (Tr: İstiklâl Mahkemeleri) to sentence to death hundreds of influential Greeks - usually by hanging - including publishers, mayors of towns and villages and previous members of the Ottoman government. Through these courts, Greek intellectuals and the political elite throughout Asia Minor were killed in a matter of months. In the region of Pontus alone, 60 people per day were hanged during the month of September 1921.[8]

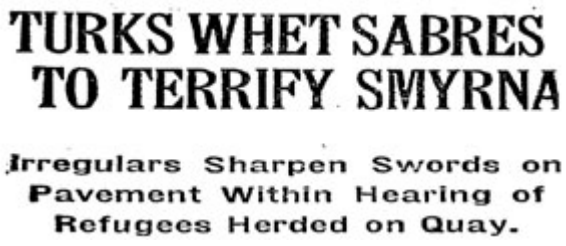
Mark Hopkins Ward, an American physician working at the American Hospital in Harput, witnessed native Greeks being deported to the interior of Turkey. He was expelled by the Kemalists for keeping notes on the deportations. Ward said:

The Kemalists pursued with vigor their considered and systematic campaign for the extermination of the Greek minority in Asia Minor, which was attended with the same incredible brutality as marked the Turkish massacre of 1,000,000 Armenians in the early part of the Great War.[9]

One of the final acts of the Greek Genocide occurred at Izmir (formerly Smyrna) in Septemner 1922 when Kemalist forces entered the city and took part in an orgy of looting, rape and massacre that targeted the city's Christian population, primarily Greeks and Armenians. They then burnt the city to the ground. While one source estimated a death toll of 120,000, it's likely the figure was considerably higher.

In his memoires, Winston Churchill (1874-1965) wrote:

..Mustapha Kemal's Army .. celebrated their triumph by the burning of Smyrna to ashes and by a vast massacre of its Christian population...[10]



TURKS WHET SABRES TO TERRIFY SMYRNA

Irregulars Sharpen Swords on Pavement Within Hearing of Refugees Herded on Quay.

New York Times, 21 September 1922.

Adolf Hitler, the perpetrator of the 20th century's most recognized genocide, considered Atatürk as his "star in the darkness." He expressed admiration for Atatürk and repeatedly stressed that he was Atatürk's student. In 1938 during an interview with Turkish politicians, Hitler stated: "..Atatürk was a teacher; Mussolini was his first and I his second student."[11] Hitler also considered Atatürk's Turkish Nationalist movement as being a "shining star" for him.

In an interview with Swiss journalist Emile Hilderbrand published on Sunday 1st of August 1926 in the *Los Angeles Examiner* under the title "Kemal Promises More Hangings of Political Antagonists in Turkey", Mustafa Kemal acknowledged the Turkish massacres of its Christian element but attributed responsibility to the Committee for Union and Progress: He said:

These left-overs from the former Young Turkey Party, who should have been made to account for the lives of millions of our Christian subjects who were ruthlessly driven en masse, from their homes and massacred, have been restive under the Republican rule.[12]

Today, Kemal holds the title "Atatürk" meaning *father of Turks* and is regarded as a national hero in Turkey where it's illegal to insult his memory. However, western academics have widely questioned the Turkish view of Kemal's role in the late Ottoman Empire. For example, in a speech at the European Parliament in Brussels on 13 November 2008, Dr. Ronald Münch from the University of Bremen pointed out that if Atatürk were alive today, he would have to stand trial for war crimes.[13]

He died in Istanbul in 1938.

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Further reading:
Atatürk in the Nazi Imagination

There are no comments yet.