

1922 Report on Turkey

by George Horton, Consul General of the United States in Smyrna., September 26th & 27th, 1922.

The following is the report written on September 26th and 27th, 1922 by George Horton, Consul General of the United States in Smyrna, addressed to the Athens Consulate, informing the US government about the latest events in Minor Asia.

AMERICAN CONSULATE GENERAL

Athens, Greece, September 27, 1922

SUBJECT: The Near Eastern Question

THE HONORABLE THE SECRETARY OF STATE, WASHINGTON

SIR:

I have the honor to submit to the Department a statement of what has been and is going on in the Near East, with a brief discourse on the events and causes which have led up to the appalling tragedy that is now being enacted at Smyrna.

I have the honor to call the attention of the Department to the fact that immediately after the Greeks landed in Smyrna, I telegraphed that this would prove a second "Syracusan Expedition", referring to the war against Syracuse in 413 B.C. which led to the complete depletion of the Athenian treasury and the effacement of Athens as the leading power of the ancient world.

In another dispatch, whose date I cannot refer to here as the archives are in Smyrna, I predicted that if the Greek army retreated from Asia Minor it would be followed by the entire Christian population and said that anyone who could not foresee this was not familiar with the situation of the Near East and the mentality of its peoples. A copy of this was forwarded to Constantinople, and I remember receiving an explanation to the effect that the new Turkish administration which would be established would be a "kindly and benevolent administration".

Of course in some circles, the hideous and outrageous conduct of the Turks in Smyrna will be explained by the rage created among the Turks by the devastation, caused by the Greek army in its retreat upon this city. I have been in the Consular service in the Near East for nearly thirty years and there are some things which all men who have had long residence in this country absolutely know. After the atrocious and frightful massacre of Armenians in 1915 of which I reported to the Department full accounts given me by the native-born American eyewitnesses, representatives of American firms who came to Smyrna, I did not see how anyone could any longer have faith in the kindly intentions of the Turks towards the Christian populations of the empire. About one million and a quarter Armenians perished in that awful affair, done to death by slow torture under circumstances of the most dreadful cruelty. This methodical extermination of the Christian population has been going on steadily ever since. The fear inspired in the Christian population is such that the non-Mussulman inhabitants of Smyrna would in any case have run away at the first definite announcement that the Turks were coming back. This is so plain that anybody ought to be able to see it.

The last great Sultan of the old Ottoman empire was Abdul Hamid, the last great ruler who knew what the Ottoman empire was, namely the remains of the old Byzantine empire, composed of various industrial and progressive races whom the Turks lived upon as a parasite by taxing them. Abdul Hamid knew that the safety of the so-called Ottoman empire lay in keeping the Christians in dissension, a not very difficult task, -and as far as Macedonia was concerned, he kept a special expert at Salonica whose duty was to provoke rows between the Bulgarians, Greeks and Serbians. When he was deposed and the so-called new Turk came into power, they commenced, as my dispatches and those of all my colleagues at the post at that time will show, to persecute and exterminate Bulgarians, Greeks and Serbians indiscriminately and a general reign of terror was started. The prisons overflowed and Salonica began to fill with women reporting their husbands had been killed or spirited away. No general massacre took place but sporadic killings almost amounting to a massacre, besides brutal tortures, prevailed all over Macedonia. The situation became so intolerable that the Greeks, Bulgarians and Serbians were obliged to get together for long enough to drive out the Turk, a thing which they could have done at any time for many years past but for the dissensions mentioned above. It is true that they fell at each other's throats as soon as their task was finished but they stayed together long enough to accomplish this.

What has been at the back of the minds of the Turks ever since the fall of Abdul Hamid is well-represented in their slogan, "Turkey for the Turks". Themselves unprogressive, except in the arts of war, incapable of commerce on a large scale or manufacturing, inventions or modern industry, they are jealous of the Christians whom they regard as thriving at their expense. I have heard Turkish politicians make speeches at Salonica in which they affirm that if the Christians were exterminated and driven out, the Turks would of sheer necessity progress and develop schools, commerce and industry. Then followed the great massacre mentioned above and other great massacres on a smaller scale.

The landing of the Greeks in Asia Minor as actually carried out was the great mistake of Venizelos. Though undoubtedly asked by the representatives of all the allies to go to Smyrna, he should not have done so without an actual treaty, with a written statement of what support they would give. To avoid the horrible catastrophe which has followed, which is exciting the fanaticism and daring of the entire Mussulman world, involving both France and Italy in untold dangers, only two plans were possible: (1st) Never to have sent the Greeks to Asia Minor; (2nd) Once having sent them there, to support them in a loyal manner. What really happened was immediate dissension among the allies as always in history among Christians. Italy, which had practically been promised Smyrna, started a port at New Ephesus to draw the trade if possible away from the former city and began to sell arms to the Turks and to flatter them. The French, to undermine Great Britain in the Near East, took up an attitude towards the Turks which finally resulted in the Treaty of Angora and the recognition by the French of that government.

Previous to this, there had been no such thing as patriotism among the Turks, an ignorant, nomadic people. But the landing of the Greeks gave Mustapha Kemal the very argument he desired for uniting Turks and the forming of an army. He could not incite the Mussulman peasant to leave his plough or his camels or his herd of goats by an appeal to his patriotism; but an appeal to his fanaticism to drive out the hated Greeks and plunder their rich towns and capture their women found a ready response. Throughout the whole Mussulman world, since the fall of Constantinople, there has been a legend that the Turk was the Musulman race which could make Europe tremble. The flattering of the Turk and the wooing of him by the great Christian nations, has again revived in India and Egypt and among Mussulmans generally this ancient tradition.

The regime of the Greeks in Asia Minor was the only civilized and beneficent regime which that country has seen since historic times. I was in close touch with Mr. Sterghiades through in all, I have talked with scores of native-born Americans who have travelled over the region and I absolutely know of what I am talking. Greeks were more severely punished for aggressions against Turks than Turks for aggressions against Greeks. Brigandage was practically suppressed, security very generally reigned and insofar as the means of the Greek government permitted, Mr. Sterghiades supported and originated civilized institutions and progress and

promoted agriculture, and industry. The Greek farmers, who had but a few years before been driven out from their homes and their villages destroyed, had largely returned and had begun again the cultivation of the famous Sultana grape on a large scale, of tobacco and other agricultural products. I am sending the Department, in another dispatch, a list of the various benevolent acts towards American educational institutions by Mr. Sterghiades together with another list of the opposite kind of treatment which they have suffered from the Turks. Those institutions are forever lost in Smyrna and vicinity - the large college and agricultural school of Dr. MacLachlan, which has been growing for thirty years, with its expensive buildings constructed with American money, has no longer a reason for existing. The end of that admirable institution was significantly brought to a full stop by the attack upon Dr. MacLachlan himself by Turkish soldiers, in which he nearly lost his life. The Greeks and Armenians who largely supported it are gone, not to return for many years. The Turks will not attend it. Mrs. Caldwell, wife of one of the professors, told me yesterday that their Turkish students whom they regarded as fine young men, with well - molded characters, slumped all their civilization and became savages when the Turks arrived in Smyrna. The Girls School, one of the most admirable institutions in the Near East, the Y.M.C.A., the Y. W. C. A. and two institutions for working among the Turks, both of which had been liberally supported by Mr. Sterghiades, are all hopelessly gone. There will doubtless be some business with Smyrna in the near future, some figs will be raised and possibly some raisings and tobacco, but the whole territory is devastated, the real progressive workers are gone and any large development along progressive lines is over perhaps forever.

The Greeks in Smyrna district contended with many difficulties; (1st) the apathy of the native population which did not support them as it should, (2nd) the impossibility to really placate the Turk, (3rd) the big Levantine, British, French and other merchants who had made fortunes under the old Turk of the capitulations and knew that it was impossible to exploit the Greek, (4th) the hostility of the large Catholic element which is just as bitter against the Greeks as it was in the days of the Byzantine empire.

Another thing that has greatly handicapped the Greeks is their pernicious and corrupt politics. The amount to which politics is played in Greece and the extent to which the Greek politician will go, even to the sacrifice of his country and of many lives in order to keep his party in power for a few weeks can hardly be believed. The overthrow of Venizelos, Greece's great advocate in Europe and America, and the bringing back of its discredited king, was the beginning of the end. Politics is played to such an extent that even now, in the face of this tremendous tragedy to Greece, it is not lost sight of, and the Royalist party will not even allow Venizelists to distribute money which they are receiving from Europe or to establish soup kitchens.

I firmly believe from my observations in Smyrna and from information which I have received from various sources, that the terrible disaster which has happened to the inhabitants of Asia

Minor was the result of a contemptible political move. The party in power believed they could not get the help of Europe without turning out Constantine and bringing back Venizelos. Without that help, they could not stay in Smyrna, they could not announce that they were willing to withdraw their armies from the Smyrna district, and they therefore deliberately provoked the debacle which the world has seen. For months there has been a steady withdrawing of Venizelist officers and their replacing by trusted Royal-ists, many of whom have been deserting their troops, leaving whole regiments without officers. I am credibly informed that the Greek army, even at the last moment, could have made a stand and retrieved the situation as the Turkish forces which entered Smyrna were insignificant. But even the Greek officers who desired to make a stand and expressed their ability to do so were ordered to retire. The whole pitiful tragedy, resulting in the most poignant human suffering on a great scale, must provoke general disgust, and discouragement, with reference to Greeks, Turks and Europe. Mustapha Kemal had an opportunity to justify the praises of his European and American propagandists and to put the Christians to shame by entering Smyrna peacefully and affording protection to all its inhabitants. Instead a revolting massacre was perpetrated, which I have already described but which I shall refer to again. Looting and pillaging and rape and massacre went on a large scale immediately after the entry of the Turks, their vengeance first breaking upon the Armenian population, who were accused of having thrown bombs. The truth is that very few bombs were thrown, possibly half a dozen at the utmost and those in a quarter of the city where Armenians are seldom seen. This was no excuse for a hunting, night and day for three days, of Armenians by squads of regular soldiers and their killing in the most revolting manner by being shot, stabbed, hacked to death or having their throats cut publicly in the streets. Armenians were systematically hunted and killed throughout the entire city and their houses methodically broken into, street by street, pillaged, and the men taken out and killed. No pro-Turk propaganda can obscure what actually occurred in Smyrna; -there were too many reliable witnesses. The truth is sure to come out.

After the great fire, as a result of which the whole Christian population was forced upon the quay where it remained for days stretching its hands to the battleships in the harbor, screaming and pleading for help and dying of hunger and thirst, the conduct of the Turks was abominable. Miss Emily MacCallum, director of the Girls School in Smyrna, who returned from that city this morning, says that there are still great throngs of these miserable creatures on the quay and along the seashore, without water and without food and dying, and that the stench of these dead bodies is terrible. There are still two hundred thousand waiting on the quay to be taken off. It has been announced that all of the men from eighteen to forty-five years of age are to be taken as prisoners of war and marched into the interior, and she saw, corroborating statements by others recently from Smyrna, large bands of men being marched away by Turkish guards. The heart of the whole world has been calloused by the European war but there are still people living who can appreciate the fearful suffering caused by this forcible separation of these people is certain death. During the Great War, while I was in Smyrna, the rayahs, or Greek Ottoman subjects, were forcibly taken for military service and set to digging trenches and other work in the rain, without blankets or tents or food, and three out of four of them died. The families will be brought away, wives and sisters and children will be without natural protectors, and must perish unless indefinitely cared for.

It will be the theory of some that no relief work should be done in Greece and that the brunt of feeding all the refugees brought there should be borne by that country as she was responsible for the great debacle, but the funds of Greece are exhausted and she is unequal to this task, and I do not know why innocent third parties should be made to suffer for the faults of others.

I wish to repeat that the consistent policy of the Turk, since the fall of Abdul Hamid, has been the expulsion, killing and elimination of the Christian races. I have made several successful prophecies and I now make another: if the Kemalist forces are allowed to enter Constantinople, the awful scenes which we have witnessed in Smyrna will be repeated in that city. In view of all that I have said and of all that has happened, I see no reason why the Turks should massacre Armenians and Greeks, in the Pontus, in Armenia and Asia Minor, and give them a "kindly and benevolent reign" in Constantinople.

I wish now to point out the difference between the Greeks and the Turk. The Greeks have undoubtedly massacred Turks, but no nation has such a consistent history of massacres on a great scale or ever had in the world's history as the Turks. Greek politics are corrupt and vicious but the Greek is capable of civilization along modern lines; he builds hospitals, universities, founds steamship lines, introduces modern agriculture and given liberty, he develops. I see a difference between the excesses of a furious and betrayed army, retreating through a country which it had held for several years and without its officers, and the conduct of the victorious Turkish army which, instead of protecting the helpless people which it had in its power, deliberately set about massacring and outraging it.

No one who has not lived in the Near East can understand how utterly incapable of progress the Turk is. No one, who has not travelled through the Turkish villages or through the back region of the Turkish empire, can understand how hopelessly unprogressive a people is, who, holding for nearly five hundred years the fairest and richest part of the earth's surface, has never made a sewing machine nor a plough, nor a steam engine, nor a battleship, nor a cotton gin, nor a pin, nor a match. Anyone who hopes for the progress of Turkey inhabited only by Turks is hoping for the leopard to change its spots. The Mussulman religion, which is now having a great renaissance throughout the world, with its polygamy, its attitude toward women and to all non-Mussulman races, and the example and teachings of Mohammed as opposed to the teachings and life of Christ, is one of the dark forces at work in the world which are combining to destroy modern civilization. The killing off and extermination of progressive Christian populations and its substitution by Mohammedanism, is a slump in those regions in the world's progress back to the days of Abraham. Example and teachings of Mohammed as opposed to the teachings and life of Christ, is one of the dark forces at work in the world which are combining to destroy modern civilization. The killing off and extermination of progressive

Christian populations and its substitution by Mohammedanism, is a slump in those regions in the world's progress back to the days of Abraham.

I have also the honor also to point out to the Department that all massacres on a large scale perpetrated by Turks, and the history of the Turkish empire is largely a history of massacres, are always ordered by higher authorities. Anyone who believes that the forces of Mustapha Kemal got out of hand at Smyrna and that he controlled them as soon as he could, knows nothing about the history of Turkey or events in the Near East. I believe also if the Allied fleets in Smyrna harbor, the French, Italians, British and Americans, had emphatically told Mustapha Kemal that there must be no massacring, none would have taken place. If they told him today that he must cease carrying off the men between eighteen and forty-five into the interior, he would stop, but when he sees the great powers of the world sitting by in security on their battleships watching his fearful procedures, he is emboldened to greater and still greater excesses. The sight of a massacre going on under the eyes of the great powers of Europe and with their seemingly tacit consent, is one that I hope never to see again.

I believe that when the real truth is known of what happened in Smyrna and what has been happening in the Near East, all decent people in Europe and the United States will feel as I do.

September 26, 1922

Since writing the above, I have been informed that the three Entente powers have sent a note to Mustapha Kemal announcing that, with their consent, his armies will be allowed to occupy Constantinople and Thrace. The panic, which this announcement must necessarily cause among the native Christians and even European inhabitants of Constantinople, has, I am sure, commenced. The Department is better qualified to know what is going on in Constantinople than I am here but I hazard this assertion as a certainty without definite information. The native Christians do well to leave, such of them as can get away, for even if measures are taken to prevent a savage massacre on the arrival of the Kemalist troops, the life of the Christians will be intolerable and unsafe and massacres will surely be perpetrated from time to time in the future. Long observation has convinced me that the Turk is incapable of governing Christian populations. Such may have thrived under the old Turk in a general way, despite the numberless massacres which are a blot upon Turkish history, but the policy of the New Turk will render the life of the Christian element impossible. I believe that when the real truth is known of what happened in Smyrna and what has been happening in the Near East, all decent people in Europe and the United States will feel as I do.

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FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES:

(1) Turkish massacres are always carried out by order of superior authorities. This is a well-known principle and the way in which various historic massacres have been conducted abundantly proves it. Such was the case at Smyrna, and Mustapha Kemal's statement that he could not control his troops is false. It is a curious fact that the Turk is still able to deceive Europeans, despite long observation of his tactics. It is probable that one emphatic word to the Turkish commander by the French Admiral would have stopped the massacre and all the horrors that followed.

(2) It should be borne in mind that it has been for some time the policy of the Turkish nationalists to exterminate and eliminate the native Christian element in Turkey. Any one forming plans for future business or diplomatic relations with Turkey should bear this in mind and be fully aware of the changed conditions in the country.

(3) Kemalism has been built up by the Allies by their weakness and dissension. The conduct of France has been one of faithlessness to the Allies, with the purpose of obtaining concessions, and undermining British influence in the Near East. Great Britain, on account of labor opposition and Mussulman unrest in India, is obliged to swallow this bitter pill, with the hope that concessions to Kemal will quiet the Mussulmans of India. This is a mistake and has been a

mistaken policy from the beginning. The entry of the Kemalists into Constantinople will arouse the Mussulmans of India beyond control.

(4) Constantinople is today as it was at the time of its fall the outer bulwark of Europe against the hordes of Asia, and once it is given over to the Turk, he will commence a war of conquest upon the Balkan States, -if not today, tomorrow, and if not this year, next year, and the peace of Europe will be perpetually in danger. The Turk is a race who has no interests in the arts of peace and who knows nothing but war and conquest. It is impossible for him to refrain from warlike operations. Any plans made on his promises or on any different suppositions are doomed to disappointment, and statesmen who form any schemes for the future on any different basis are building on a false foundation.

I am unfortunately but a simple official, not occupying an exalted position, and my words will perhaps not bear great weight, but I know whereof I am speaking and some who read these lines will live to see them verified.

OBSERVATION:

The men between the ages of eighteen and forty-five, who are today being torn from their wives, sisters, mothers and children, amid pitiful scenes that only a DeQuincey could describe, and being driven away by the Turks to perish by slow starvation and exposure, are the peaceful farmers of Asia Minor and the citizens of Smyrna who were never in sympathy with the government of Constantine and who are in no ways responsible for the fearful fate which has befallen them. This unrighteous act is being carried out without even a word of protest by any civilized government.

I have the honor to be, Sir,

Your obedient servant,

American Consul General, Smyrna

