

## A Brief History of the Pontian Greek Genocide (1914-1923)

### Who are the Pontian Greeks?

Pontus (Greek Pontos), an ancient Greek word for “sea”, refers to the Black Sea and the surrounding coastal areas. The presence of Greeks in the area dates back to ancient times, some 2000 years before the migration of Turkic people in this area in the 10<sup>th</sup> century A.D. Research suggests that in the period around 1000 B.C., the first trading adventures in this area took place, mainly in search of gold and other minerals. During the 8th Century B.C. Greeks from Miletus (Greek Miletos) colonized this area, creating cities like Sinope, Samsun (Greek Amisos) and Trebizond or Trapezunt (Greek Trapezus). Pontus contributed great thinkers such as the philosopher Diogenes of Sinope and the geographer Strabo of Amasia.



*Figure 1. Map of Greece and Turkey, circa 1912*

Following the death of Alexander the Great, the Greek city-states of Pontus and the Pontian hinterland formed the Kingdom of Pontus under the Mithridates family. The Kingdom was the most powerful in the eastern Mediterranean until its defeat by the Romans in 63 B.C.

With the advent of Christianity, in late Roman and early Byzantine times the great monasteries of Pontus were founded in the high mountains southeast of Trapezus, most notably the monastery of Panagia Soumela (Virgin Mary of Soumela) in 386 A.D. Pontus produced two of the greatest intellectuals of the Mediterranean world, Cardinal Bessarion, and George the Trapezuntine.

The fragmentation of the Byzantine Empire, as a result of the Latin conquest of Constantinople in 1204 by the Crusaders, led to the emergence of the Greek Empire of Trebizond under the great Byzantine dynasty, the Comnenus family. The Empire finally fell



to the Ottoman Turks in 1461, some eight years after the fall of Constantinople, the capital of the Byzantine Empire, in 1453.

During the first two hundred years of Ottoman rule, the Pontian Greeks successfully resisted the extraordinary pressures to convert to Islam. Geographic, economic, and historical factors all combined to enable the Pontian Greeks to preserve their dynamic social cohesion, deeply rooted ethnic traditions, and distinctive Greek culture and dialect.

During the 17th and 18th centuries, approximately 250,000 Pontian Greeks were forced to convert to Islam. Although most Greeks remained in the Pontus, thousands migrated into areas of the Caucasus and northern shores of the Black Sea controlled by Russia. This movement into Russian territory which began in 1774, was encouraged by Russia, which preferred that this area be populated with fellow Christians. Pontian Greeks also fled there to escape Turkish oppression and persecution, particularly following the numerous Russian-Turkish wars in the nineteenth century along the Caucasus in which the Ottomans suffered one defeat after another. They took out their frustrations on the Pontian Greeks and the Armenians who lived in the border areas, in the Trebizond to Erzerum provinces.

Nevertheless, in an attempt to bring the Ottoman Empire into the world economy, new laws were introduced in the 19<sup>th</sup> century to modernize the empire. The lives of Ottoman subjects, including the Christian minorities were also improved by attempts to assert the control of the central government and to contain the oppressive rule of local Turkish despots. Unfortunately, the resulting social, religious and economic renaissance in the Christian communities ended during the beginning of the 20th Century.

### **The Pontian Greek Genocide**

In 1908, the Young Turks (Turkish nationalists) gained control of the government by revolting against the Sultan Hamid. After the Ottoman Empire's defeat in the Balkan Wars of 1912–1913, the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP), an ultra nationalist group of Young Turks, took control of the government. Its goal was to achieve the Turkification of the Empire and to eliminate ethnic Christian minorities such as the Armenians, Assyrians, and Pontian Greeks.

From *The Murder of a Nation* by Henry Morgenthau, American Ambassador to Turkey (1913–1916)

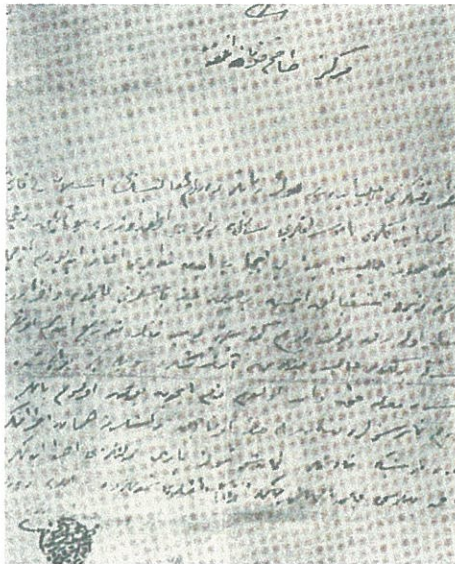
*... The Armenians are not the only subject people in Turkey which have suffered from this policy of making Turkey exclusively the country of the Turks. The story which I have told about the Armenians I could also tell with certain modifications about the Greeks and Syrians [Assyrians]. Indeed the Greeks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

With the commencement of World War I in 1914, Turkey called for general mobilization. Since the Christian men were not allowed to bare arms, they were sent to labor battalions in the interior of Turkey which were essentially "battalions of death." Forced labor in the treacherous mountains and ravines, hunger, and exposure to severe weather conditions killed most of those forced to serve in these labor battalions. Some of those who survived were able to escape to join those Greeks in the mountains who took up arms to protect themselves and their families.

After eliminating a significant part of the male population, the Young Turk leaders and later Kemal Ataturk, proceeded to eliminate the rest of the Greek population including the elderly, women, and children. Their plan was to deport the Greek population to the interior and



expose them to severe weather conditions, hunger, and illness. Censorship was used quite effectively to avoid headlines in the foreign press. After executing many prominent Greeks in the western Pontus, the Turks proceeded to deport a large part of the Greek population to the interior, Kurdistan, and as far as Syria.



Documentary Evidence that Turkish Officials Ordered the Atrocities. Translated, it reads in part:

"To the Commandant of the Central Brigade:

"I call your attention to the following:"

"There is nothing but death for the Greeks, who are without honor. As soon as the slightest sign is given you, destroy everything about you immediately. As for the women, stop at nothing. Do not take either honor or friendship into consideration when the moment of vengeance arrives!"

"The Commandant of the Brigade"

"Mehmet Azit"

**Figure 2.** Documentary Evidence of the Genocide (from "The Great Betrayal" by E.H. Bierstadt)

Along the way, the deportees were robbed of money and clothes by mob of Turkish and Kurdish peasants, and women and girls were raped by the armed escorts who were supposed to protect them. Hundreds of thousands of Greek men, women and children died as a result of these deportations and other atrocities.

From *The Blight of Asia*, by George Horton, U.S. Consul-General in the Near East, 1926:

*In January, 1916, the Greek deportations from the Black Sea began. These Greeks came through the city of Marsovan by thousands, walking for the most part the three days' journey through the snow and mud and slush of the winter weather. Thousands fell by the wayside from exhaustion and others came into the city of Marsovan in groups of fifty, one hundred and five hundred, always under escort of Turkish gendarmes. Next morning these poor refugees were started on the road and destruction by this treatment was even more radical than a straight massacre such as the Armenians suffered before. (p. 194)*

From a report by Stanley K. Hopkins of the Near East Relief, November 16, 1921:

*After leaving Samsoun on my return trip to Harpoot I passed the old men of Samsoun, Greeks, who were being deported. Many of these men were feeble with age, but in spite of that they were being pressed forward at a rate of thirty miles a day and there was no transport available for those who were weak or ill. There was no food allowance for them and any food they could obtain had to be procured by money or sale of small articles that they could carry with them. On this trip I passed many corpses of Greeks lying by the roadside where they had died from exposure. Many of these were the corpses of women and girls with their faces toward*

*the sky, covered with flies. (Genocide, 13, pp. 219–220)*

From Lloyd George, British Prime Minister, House of Commons (Parliament Debates):

*... tens of thousands of (Greek) men, women and Children were expelled and dying. It was clearly a deliberate extermination. "Extermination" is not my word. It is the word being used by the American mission.*

From The Memorandum by Mr. G.W. Rendel, of the Foreign Office, on Turkish Massacres and Persecutions of Minorities since the Armistice. March 20, 1922.

*"Serious persecutions in the Mardin area, affecting about 30,000 Christians were also reported by Sir P. Cox. But the worst atrocities undoubtedly took place in the Pontic region against the Greek population of the coastal towns."*

**By 1923, out of an approximately 700,000 Pontian Greeks who lived in Turkey at the beginning of World War I, as many as 350,000 were killed, and almost all the rest had been uprooted during the subsequent forced population exchange between Greece and Turkey. This was the end of one of the ancient Greek civilizations in Asia Minor.**

**As a consequence of the deliberate and systematic policy of Turkification of the Ottoman Empire, it is estimated that more than 2.75 million Armenians, Assyrians and Greeks were slaughtered outright or were victims of the white death, of disease and starvation - a result of the routine process of deportations, slave labor, and death marches.**

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Except where noted otherwise, this pamphlet is based on the lecture, "Pontic Hellenism and the Asia Minor Disaster, 1908–1923" presented by Dr. H.J. Psomiades on May 19<sup>th</sup>, 2006, sponsored by the Pontian Greek Society of Chicago "Xeniteas"



*From the Book of Jean De Murat "The Great Extirpation of Hellenism & Christianity In Asia Minor"-The Historic and Systematic Deception of World Opinion Concerning The Hideous Christianity's Uprooting of 1922*

*"Kemal celebrated his triumph by transforming Smyrna into ashes and by slaughtering the whole of the indigenous Christian population "*

WINSTON CHURCHILL

*"... tens of thousands of (Greek) men, women and Children were expelled and dying. It was clearly a deliberate extermination. 'Extermination' is not my word. It is the word being used by the American mission".*

LLOYD GEORGE British Prime Minister  
(House of Commons. The Parliament  
Debates, Fifth series, vol. 157) /

*"The Turks seem to be acting based on a premeditated plan for the elimination of the minorities...."*

Letter of Sir HORACE RUMBOLD,  
British High Commissioner, in  
Constantinople, to CURZON,  
the British Minister of Foreign Affairs



**A reliable source of information is the book "The Murder of a Nation" by the late Henry Morgenthau, American Ambassador to Turkey 1913-1916. The American Ambassador in his book writes the following in pages 52 and 53:**

.....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 the Syrians. Indeed the Greeks were the first victims of this nationalizing idea. I have already described how, in the few months preceding the European War, the Ottoman Government began deporting its Greek subjects along the coast of Asia Minor. These outrages aroused little interest in Europe or the United States, yet in the space of three or four months more than 100,000 Greeks were taken from their age-long homes in the Mediterranean littoral and removed to the Greek Islands and the interior. For the larger part these were bona-fide deportations; that is, the Greek inhabitants were actually removed to new places and were not subjected to wholesale massacre. It was probably for the reason that the civilized world did not protest against these deportations that the Turks afterward decided to apply the same methods on a larger scale not only to the Greeks but to the Armenians, Syrians, Nestorians, and others of its subject peoples. ....

The martyrdom of the Greeks, therefore, comprised two periods: that antedating the war, and that which began in the early part of 1915. The first affected chiefly the Greeks on the seacoast of Asia Minor. The second affected those living in Thrace and in the territories surrounding the Sea of Marmora, the Dardanelles, the Bosphorus, and the coast of the Black Sea. These latter, to the extent of several hundred thousand, were sent to the interior of Asia Minor. The Turks adopted almost identically the same procedure against the Greeks as that which they had adopted against the Armenians. They began by incorporating the Greeks into the Ottoman army and then transforming them into labour battalions, using them to build roads in the Caucasus and other scenes of action. These Greek soldiers, just like the Armenians, died by thousands from cold, hunger, and other privations. The same house-to-house searches for hidden weapons took place in the Greek villages, and Greek men and women were beaten and tortured just as were their fellow Armenians. The Greeks had to submit to the same forced requisitions, which amounted in their case, as in the case of the Armenians, merely to plundering on a wholesale scale. The Turks attempted to force the Greek subjects to become Mohammedans; Greek girls, just like Armenian girls, were stolen and taken to Turkish harems and Greek boys were kidnapped and placed in Moslem households. The Greeks, just like the Armenians, were accused of disloyalty to the Ottoman Government....



**Excerpts from "The Great Betrayal" by Edward Hale Bierstadt—Washington  
Executive Secretary of the Emergency Committee for the Near East Relief (pages  
201 and 202)**

THE "CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR," BOSTON, WEDNESDAY, MAY 31st, 1922

GREEK MASSACRES BY TURKS CONTINUE

*Ruthless Policy of Extermination continues—Evidence of  
Americans living in Anatolia.*

(By Special Cable.)  
By Herbert Adams Gibbons, Ph.D.,

Trebizond, May 24th. (Delayed in Transmission).

Despite repeated blank denials, the Angora Turks are following a deliberate and ruthless policy of extermination of the Greeks. I find that Trebizond is being cleared of the remaining Christian population.

Two years ago there were 25,000 Greeks here. To-day, between the ages of 80 and 14, the male population numbers 6 priests and 10 civilians. Not one doctor, not one teacher is left. The Greek hospitals and Greek schools are closed and even private lessons in the homes are forbidden. There are no Greeks in business. The Greeks were the most prosperous element here, with fine homes, a splendid hospital, owning large summer villas on the hills; but now that the fathers and the husbands and the sons have gone, the women are plunged into deep poverty.

I see the women digging ditches, passing stones to masons, carrying heavy burdens in bare feet and rags. They are the longshoremen of the port. Now, after having deported all the older boys, the Angora Government has ordered the seizure of children of 14 down to 11 years of age. It is a heartrending sight to see the poor little children herded like cattle, driven through the streets to the Government House, where they are being thrown into a filthy under-ground dungeon. Some 300 were thus collected on May 20th at Trebizond.

*Free from Foreign Eyes*

This week these will follow their elders to the barbedwire enclosure near Jevislik, on the road to Erzerum, far from the unpleasantly inquisitive eyes of foreigners, and where they will disappear for ever. For the deportees, once entering the Jevislik camp, never leave it. The Turks give them no food, which of course can only have one result. Not only Trebizond, but all the Greek villages of this region, feed their mankind into the Moloch jaws of Jevislik.

The Armenian villages were long ago destroyed; now has come the turn of the Greek peasants. With no men and boys, having no seed, cattle or farming tools, the women cannot eke out a living, so they come with their children to Trebizond in quest of food, the young girls hiding their youth behind dirt and rags. Whatever outrages may be perpetrated, the authorities make no investigation.

*Prominent Turks Protest*

Prominent Turks of Jevislik came here to protest. "Jevislik cries out to Heaven against us, we shall be doomed among the nations," one of these declared, while another pleaded with the Vali that the Turkish national honour should be no longer stained with such crimes against humanity, but though Ebou Bekir Hakim, the Vali, and Hushein, the Mayor, feel the shame of making war on little boys, they are powerless to arrest the execution of a decree which has been determined by a secret committee which rules this country.



*"The Martyrdom of Smyrna and Eastern Christendom" by Dr. Lysimachos Economos - Lecturer at the University of London, 1922, pages 28-42.*

## GREEK DEPORTEES FROM THE BLACK SEA COAST ON THEIR WAY TO BITLIS

*Evidence of Workers of the American Near East Relief*

*Extracts from a report to the Honourable Charles E. Hughes, Secretary of State, Washington, U.S.A., by Major F. D. Yowell, former Director of the Harpoot Branch of the American Near East Relief (prior to May 5th, 1922).*

The condition of the Christian populations in the Interior has steadily grown worse within the past two years until now the Armenians and Greek deportees are in a condition worse than slavery.

The attitude of the Vilayet Government toward the Greeks who were being (and who are still) deported through Sivas-Harpoot-Diarbekir from the Black Sea Coast and the Konia district, seems to be one of extermination. From statistics obtained from American sources—persons who have come into contact with the deportees in the course of their work of relief—we have accounted for at least 30,000 who reached Sivas. Of this number 8000 died on the route to Harpoot and 2000 remained in Malatia (March). After many obstacles thrown in our way by Turkish officials to prevent the N.E.R. from assisting these refugees were overcome, we were able to save thousands of lives by giving food, clothing and medical care. However, 2000 refugees died in Harpoot during the past winter. About 3000 now remain in Harpoot, Mezra, and scattered in villages near by. The remaining 20,000 were sent on toward Diarbeldr, and it was not merely a coincidence, in my opinion, that days when terrible snowstorms were in progress were selected to send these people, three-fourths of whom were women and children, out over almost impassable mountains, without food or covering of any kind, and where no shelter can be found. In all cases these people have been robbed of everything that can be taken from them before they have progressed but few days on their journey, and the most attractive girls taken into Moslem homes.

Of the 15,000 sent toward Diarbekir 3000 died on the route and 1000 died in Diarbekir. About 1000 (all men) were taken by the Government to work on the roads between Harpoot and Diarbekir. They were given no pay, and their entire food allowance consisted of 200 grs. of bread per day and a little thin soup once a day. They had no shelter and were compelled to sleep out of doors in bitterly cold weather, without bedding or covering, and when they are too ill to work their food allowance is discontinued and they are allowed to die without medical care. Of the 9000 Greeks known to have been sent on toward Bitlis, nothing further is known of their fate, as all efforts of the Americans to get there or send relief has met with failure. This we do know. Bitlis is almost totally destroyed and is not capable of supporting more than a few thousands of people. As it is also located in high mountains, reached by passes only through which vehicles cannot now travel, it can be safely assumed that few of the deportees sent toward Bitlis reached there.

"The heaviest winter weather, when a howling blizzard was raging during a blinding snowfall, was the favourite time chosen by the Turks to drive the Greeks on. Thousands perished in the snow. The road from Harput to Bitlis was lined with bodies I saw women with transparent lips who did not look human. They were like gaunt shadows. The roads over which women and children travelled were impassable for any kind of travel excepting pack mule."

Miss Thompson described how she saw three hundred small children who had been driven together in a circle with twenty gendarmes, who had dismounted from their horses, cruelly beating them with their heavy swords. When a mother rushed in to save her child, she was also beaten and driven out. The attitude of the Turks towards the Greeks who were deported from the Black Sea coast was one of extermination, she says.

The best-looking girls were taken into Moslem harems by the Turks, who boasted openly of the number of women they had taken for this purpose. Some of the girls whom she knew in Samsun disfigured their faces with dye to hide their good looks in the hope they would not be taken. If the deportees were too ill to work their food was stopped, and they died without medical aid.

When Miss Thompson and her party were preparing to leave the Turkish Governor sent for them, asked them to deny the reports already given, and threatened that, unless they promised, he would not give them permits to leave. Finally they obtained the permits without giving any promise other than to tell the truth as they saw it.



WHAT AN AMERICAN WOMAN (Miss Ethel Thompson) SAW IN ANATOLIA

*The "Unspeakable Turk" at his worst*

A graphic pen-picture of the tragic conditions prevailing in Anatolia during *the mass deportations of the Greeks by the Turks* is contained in a statement by Mm Ethel Thompson, of Boston (Mass.), concerning her work there *from August last year until the beginning of June*, which was issued yesterday by the British Armenian Committee.

She entered Anatolia to do orphanage work for the Near East Relief, unprejudiced regarding race or religion. The organisation supported the Turkish orphanage and helped the Turkish poor as well as the Armenian orphanages. She depicts "the ghastly lines of gaunt, starving Greek women and children who staggered across Anatolia through the city of Harput, their glassy eyes fairly protruding from their heads, their bones merely covered with skin, skeleton babies tied to their backs, driven on without food supplies or clothing until they dropped dead—Turkish gendarmes hurrying them with their guns."

During her stay in Samsun, in the early part of July, the Greek villages round about were burned and the inhabitants deported, including the women and children. Her house was surrounded by these women hammering at the doors, holding out their children, begging them to take the children if they could not save the women. Miss Thompson continues :

*Vultures and their Prey*

"We crossed Anatolia under a blazing sun, passing groups and groups of the old men of Samsun and the inhabitants of other Black Sea ports walking on, God knows where, driven by Turkish gendarmes. Dead bodies of those who had dropped during the hard tramp were lying by the roadside. Vultures had eaten parts of the flesh, so that in most cases merely skeletons remained.

"Upon arriving in Malatia we found the remainder of a group of young men who had been deported from Samsun in June. These men told us that the balance of their party had been killed. Upon arriving in Harput, we entered a city full of starving, sick, wretched human wrecks—Greek women, children, and men. These people were trying to make soup of grass, and considered themselves fortunate when they could secure a sheep's ear to aid it—the ear being the only part of the animal thrown away in Anatolia. The Turks had given them no food on the 500-mile trips from Samsun. Those with money could bribe the guards for food or buy a little on the way until they were robbed. Those without money died by the wayside.

"In many places, thirsty in the blistering sun and heat, they were not allowed water unless they could pay for it. The Near East Relief stations tried to give them bread as they passed Cesarea and Sivas, but the amount they could carry was small. It would have been more humane to give them a bullet than bread, because death would come in any case sooner or later.

*When the Mothers Died*

"When a woman with a baby died, the baby was taken from her dead arms and handed to another woman, and the horrible march proceeded. Old blind men led by little children trudged along the road. The whole thing was like a march of corpses, a march of death across Anatolia, which continued during my entire summer. .



## 700,000 GREEKS VICTIMS OF TURKS

Special to The New York Times.

New York Times (1857-Current file); Jul 10, 1921; ProQuest Historical Newspapers The New York Times (1851 - 2002)

pg. 4

# 700,000 GREEKS VICTIMS OF TURKS

Charge Made by Washington  
Legation, Which Puts Dead  
at That Figure.

## KILLINGS AND DEPORTATIONS

These, With Famine, Said to Have  
Been Responsible for the Trag-  
edy in Asia Minor.

Special to The New York Times.

WASHINGTON, July 9.—Nearly 700,000 Greeks have been massacred, deported, or have died of famine since the war with Turkey began, according

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to a statement given out today by the Greek Legation. Half of these victims are said to have been Greeks of Pontus and the others were from the interior of Asia Minor. Part of the statement follows:

"American travelers and others just arriving here from Samsoun, said a dispatch from Constantinople, report horrible details of the persecution of Christian populations in that region. The notorious murderous chief, Osman Agha, arrived at Samsoun the second day of Easter, a Turkish holiday similar to the murder of ten Greeks. Then, surrounding the stores of the American Tobacco Company, he arrested all the Greek clerks, numbering about 800, and had them transported to an unknown destination. The Greek quarter was then surrounded and 1,500 other Greeks arrested and deported to the interior.

"The population of thirty other villages in the Samsoun region were massacred while they were being transported to the place of exile. The Turkish authorities prohibited the use of the waters of the river contaminated by the

bodies. Other villages, having refused to comply with the deportation order, were set on fire by the Turks, and the inhabitants, regardless of age and sex, were killed.

"The American commission which went to this place reported these crimes and brought back burned bones, which were shown to the Turkish Governor. "Since the beginning of the war the Turks have exterminated by massacres, deportations and through famine more than 350,000 Greeks of the Pont (Pontus, district of Asia Minor bordering on the Black Sea) and as many other Greeks from the interior of Asia Minor. This work of extermination of an entire peaceful population is pursued right before the eyes of a civilized world.

"The Ecumenic Patriarchate is much worried by reports which are constantly coming in from the Metropolitan, regarding massacres and persecution of Greeks in the interior. The Patriarchate is preparing for the British High Commissioner a long memorandum showing in detail the Turkish crimes. At the same time the Patriarchate will call the attention of the interallied authorities to violations by the Turks of the regulations laid down by the interallied control at Constantinople in the arrest of Greeks coming from Ismid and other localities of Marmora, under the pretext that they had participated in activities against the Turks."



**IN RECOGNITION OF THE PAN-PONTIAN FEDERATION OF THE UNITED STATES AND CANADA ON THE ANNUAL DAY OF REMEMBRANCE OF THE PONTIAN GREEK VICTIMS OF GENOCIDE -- (Extensions of Remarks - May 18, 2006)**

**Page: E874**

SPEECH OF  
HON. CAROLYN B. MALONEY  
OF NEW YORK  
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
THURSDAY, MAY 18, 2006

**Mrs. MALONEY.** Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize the annual day of remembrance of the genocide of the Pontian Greek people at the hands of the Ottoman Empire that took place from 1915 to 1923, and to salute the Pan-Pontian Federation of the United States of America and Canada for its role in preserving and passing on the vibrant history and traditions of the Pontian Greeks.

With a long and distinguished history and a proud culture, the Greek Pontians have for millennia upheld Hellenic traditions against all odds. Named after Pontus, the Greek term denoting "the sea," the Pontians trace their origins to the region of the southeastern part of the Black Sea. There, one of the first Greek cities of Pontus, Sinope, was founded in 785 B.C.

The seeds for the Pontian genocide were planted during negotiations among the European powers that led to the signing of the Treaty of Berlin in 1878. The ensuing rise of nationalism led to many revolutionary wars and independence movements within the decaying Ottoman Empire, causing Turkish leaders to become increasingly fearful that their ethnically diverse domain would begin to disintegrate.

By the turn of the 20th century, many nations within the Balkans had acquired their independence from the Turks. However, due to the politics of the era, many of these newly formed nations only consisted of a small portion of their population, as the great powers had no desire to see these new Balkan states become too strong. As a result, many Serbians, Greeks and Bulgarians still lived within the borders of the Ottoman Empire. The nations of the Balkans yearned to incorporate and unite their people who still lived under Turkish rule. This situation led to the Balkan Wars of 1912-1913, in which the members of the Balkan League joined to present a united front against their Turkish oppressors. The Ottoman armies were soundly defeated, and national borders were created and rearranged accordingly.

The reality was that many different nationalities existed within the Ottoman Empire and that their increasing desire to unite with their mother countries did indeed pose an ultimately fatal threat to the continued existence of the Ottoman Empire. In reaction, the Young Turk movement ushered in a new nationalistic and ethnocentric ideology in the Ottoman Empire. From 1916 to 1923, largely under the leadership of Kemal Ataturk, the Ottoman Empire began to practice a ferocious genocide of the Christian population within its borders.

In 1916, after the Turks had concluded their massacre of the Armenian people, the Pontians became their next victims. The Pontian Greeks were subject to massacres, atrocities, mass rapes and abductions of women and children. They



were forced into starvation and sent on long marches whose true intended destination was the graveyard of history. This genocide almost resulted in the extinction of a people who had lived on Asia Minor for nearly three millennia.

Between the years of 1915 and 1923, more than half of the Pontian population, or about 353,000 human beings, fell victim to what the world now knows to be genocide. These Pontians who did survive the Turkish onslaught were exiled from their ancestral homes, and many fled to Greece, Russia and the United States. It is estimated that there were about 400,000 Pontian refugees during this cataclysmic era.

Despite the death and displacement of almost 1 million Pontians, their traditions and culture still resonate across the world to this day. While forces of evil tried to obliterate an entire people, the determination and endurance of the Pontian Greeks stand as a testament to mankind's extraordinary ability to defy all odds in the hope of ultimately living in peace and justice.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that my distinguished colleagues join me in observing the annual day of remembrance of the victims of the Pontian Greek genocide, and in recognizing the Pan-Pontian Federation of the United States of America and Canada, its vital mission of preserving Pontian Greek culture and history, and its significance as a symbol of mankind's hope and endurance.



# STATE OF ILLINOIS

EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT

## Proclamation

WHEREAS, the State of Illinois prides itself on its vast cultural diversity, and each of the many ethnic communities that comprise our State carry with them stories of their country's past – some tragic and some triumphant. These stories are important not only to preserving the rich heritage of our different ethnic populations, but they also teach valuable lessons from which our greater society benefits; and

WHEREAS, one such event is the Genocide of the Greek population in the Pontus region on the northern coast of Asia Minor (present day Turkey). This tragedy, occurring from 1914-1923, saw an estimated 353,000 Pontian Greeks, and an estimated 150,000 people from the rest of Asia Minor, die during a forced march without provisions across the Anatolian Plains to the Syrian border; and

WHEREAS, these Greek peoples, whose ancestors had lived in Asia Minor for 3,000 years, were targeted by the Ottoman Turkish authorities for expulsion along with Armenians and Assyrians, and during this awful nine-year span, the Greek population of Pontus endured immeasurable cruelty during a Turkish Government-sanctioned campaign to displace them; and

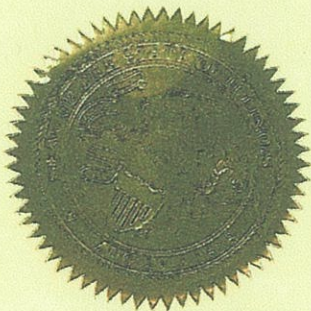
WHEREAS, those who survived through this dark time in history were exiled from Turkey, and today, they and their descendents live all throughout the Greek Diaspora, including the United States. Here in Illinois we are proud of our vibrant Greek communities, and it is fitting that the citizens of this State, along with all freedom-loving people throughout the world, join in solemn commemoration of the Greek Pontian Genocide of 1914-23; and

WHEREAS, as we work hard in Illinois to instill in our youth a universal respect for other cultures, races, religions and viewpoints, we look to stories like the Greek Pontian Genocide to help teach such critical lessons. The acknowledgement and awareness of this shameful historical event will not only teach future generations, but also will help mankind prevent such crimes from ever being repeated:

THEREFORE, I, Rod R. Blagojevich, Governor of the State of Illinois, do hereby proclaim May 19, 2006 as **GREEK PONTIAN GENOCIDE REMEMBRANCE DAY**, and join with all the people of this State in honoring the memory and sacrifices of its noble victims. Furthermore, I hereby direct that this document be filed with the Office of the Secretary of State as a permanent record.

*In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the Great Seal of the State of Illinois to be affixed.*

*Done at the Capitol, in the City of Springfield,*  
*this FIFTEENTH day of APRIL, in*  
*the Year of Our Lord two thousand and*  
*SIX, and of the State of Illinois*  
*the one hundred and EIGHTY-EIGHTH*



*Deese White*

SECRETARY OF STATE

*Rod R. Blagojevich*

GOVERNOR



## Proclamations for the Pontian Genocide Remembrance Day

- State of New York Executive Chamber Proclamation by Governor George E. Pataki (*May 15, 2006*)
- The Commonwealth of Massachusetts Proclamation by Governor Mitt Romney (*May 9, 2006*)
- The Massachusetts General Court Resolutions (*May 18, 2006*)
- The City of Norwalk, CT Proclamation by mayor Richard A. Moccia (*May 13, 2006*)
- Proclamation - Office of the Secretary of State of Illinois (*May 19, 2006*)
- State of Illinois Executive Department Proclamation by Governor Rod R. Blagojevich (*April 15, 2006*)
- Congressional Record - On the annual Day of Remembrance of the Pontian Genocide by Carolyn B. Maloney (*May 2006*)
- The Council of the City of New York Proclamation by Peter F. Vallone, Jr. (*May 14, 2006*)
- New York State Assembly Citation remembering the Pontian Genocide by Matthew Mirones (*May 19, 2006*)
- State of New York Legislative Resolution remembering the Pontian Genocide by order of the Senate (*April 25, 2006*)
- State of New York Executive Chamber Proclamation by Governor George E. Pataki (*July 14, 2005*)
- New York State Assembly Citation by Matthew Mirones (*May 22, 2005*)
- City of Cleveland, OHIO Proclamation by Mayor Jane L. Campbell (*May 19, 2005*)
- State of New York Legislative Resolution remembering the Pontian Genocide by order of the Senate (*May 17, 2005*)
- City of Cleveland Resolution of Recognition by the City Council (*May 11, 2005*)
- Florida Senate Resolution commemorating the Pontian Genocide (*April 20, 2005*)
- State of Florida House of Representatives Resolution commemorating the Pontian Genocide (*April 19, 2005*)
- Office of the Attorney General of the State of Florida Proclamation (*April 19, 2005*)
- Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Office of the Governor by Governor Edward G. Rendell (*May 2004*)
- Mayor's Proclamation City of Canton, OHIO by Mayor Janet Weir Creighton (*May 19, 2004*)
- The City of Norwalk, CT Proclamation by mayor Alex A. Knopp (*May 23, 2004*)
- Congressional Record - On the annual Day of Remembrance of the Pontian Genocide by Carolyn B. Maloney (*May 2004*)
- Senate of Pennsylvania on the Remembrance Day of the Pontian Genocide (*December 17, 2003*)
- State of New York Executive Chamber Proclamation by Governor George E. Pataki (*May 19, 2002*)
- The Senate of the State of South Carolina Proclamation (*December 8, 2002*)
- State of South Carolina Proclamation by Governor Jim Hodges (*December 8, 2002*)
- City of Columbia, South Carolina Proclamation by Mayor Robert D. Coble (*December 8, 2002*)
- State of New Jersey Joint Legislative Resolution in commemorating the Pontian Genocide (*May 2002*)
- State of New Jersey Executive Department Proclamation by Governor James E. McGreevey (*September 2002*)
- Legislative Assembly of Ontario Member's Statement by Michael D. Prue (*May 21, 2002*)
- Greetings from the Prime Minister of Canada commemorating the Pontian Genocide - Ottawa (*2001*)