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PARIS PRISON (Continued)

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TO THEIR EXCELLENCIES

The Members of THE PEACE CONFERENCE

Your Excellencies,

We have the honour to bring before your notice in this Memorial a statement setting forth certain recent developments in regard to the question of the future of the Unredeemed Greeks of the Euxine Pontus (Black Sea). This statement is submitted to your Excellencies as a supplement to our previous Memorials relative to the national aspirations of the Greeks of the Euxine Pontus, and is, we believe, of a nature to facilitate the task of the members of the Conference in their duty of establishing a stable and durable order of things in that part of the East.

The eminent Head of the Greek Government, Mr. Venizelos, made the suggestion, in the form of a personal opinion, in his Memoir of December 30 last, that the "vilayet of Trebizonde" might be attached to the proposed Armenian State." He was careful, however, to qualify his opinion by adding the following observation:

"The establishment, moreover, of the administrative divisions of this State on the basis of local ethnical conditions would assure to the Christian population, which has been so severely tried, a supportable existence, and would thus pave the way towards the ultimate complete independence of the State."

The Greek Prime Minister, furthermore, not having in spite of his great authority, either the mandate or the power to dispose of the Greeks of the Euxine Pontus, was careful to explain that the wishes of the latter, in regard to the constitution of

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an independent republic, were not in agreement with the suggestion he had put forward as an expression of his own personal opinion. This remark showed in advance the absurdity of the obviously unfounded statement that Mr. Venizelos had "ceded" the Province of Trebizonde to the State of Armenia. The same baseless assertion, however, has undoubtedly encouraged the Armenians to formulate the questionable theory which they are so loth to abandon.

In these circumstances, and in order to facilitate the finding of a solution that would best satisfy the respective aspirations of the parties concerned, we entered into friendly negotiations with a certain number of Armenians who had been nominated to represent the Armenian Congress sitting in Paris. Unofficial negotiations were begun by a Committee consisting of an equal number of representatives of both nationalities, the Greek and the Armenian.

In order to make clear the present state of the question, it is important that we should emphasize, at this point, both the state of mind which animated the Greek delegates on this Committee and the nature of the compromises they were prepared to accept.

We are happy to state that from the point of view of cooperation both Armenians and Greeks found themselves in complete agreement from the commencement. Where opinions began to differ, however, was when it became a question of finding practical means for realising the union of our common efforts.

The Greek delegates had hoped to be able to convince those they represented that it would be advantageous for them to renounce certain features of an absolute independence, in exchange for the assurance that in all other directions this inde-

pendence would be respected. With this fundamental idea as a starting point, the Greek delegates unanimously agreed to put forward the following proposals:

That the Armenian Republic and the Republic of the Euxine Pontus shall establish a real union, which shall consist in placing in common all such of their interests as may contribute to increase their strength of resistance and their solidarity.

In all other matters the two Republics shall respectively preserve their independence.

The immediate practical consequences of the application of these two principles would have been:

(1)- A pooling of interests as regards:

- (a)- Foreign policy (Foreign Office and Diplomatic representation), each Republic having the right to nominate a special representation in the case of negotiations of exclusive interest to itself (on the same lines as in the case of the Canton-States belonging to the Swiss Confederation.)
- (b)- Material affairs (Commerce, Industry, Customs)
- (c)- Communications (Posts, Telegraphs, Railways.)

(2) Autonomy for each Republic as regards:

- (a)- Ecclesiastical matters.
- (b)- Education.
- (c)- Gendarmerie.

This brief summary, without being final (for it was capable of being completed or modified), shows in its general effect the spirit which animated the Greek delegates in putting forward these proposals for a settlement by compromise on what may be called the "Swiss model."

The Armenian delegates appeared at first to be greatly attracted personally by the numerous and substantial advantages of this proposed solution. After referring the whole proposal, however, to the Armenian Delegation, presided over by His Excellency Boghos Nubar Pasha, they intimated that they were unable to accept this solution unless it were imposed upon them by the Peace Conference; and they persisted in urging the solution which

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they have proposed from the beginning, namely: that the Province of Trebizonde should be attached to or incorporated in the Armenian State, with the grant of autonomy to the Greek population in the interior of the State.

Such a solution would undermine the very foundations of the conditions on which a solid agreement could be concluded between two peoples - an agreement which pre-supposes reciprocal concessions. As a matter of fact, the Greeks of the Euxine Peninsula, by accepting the compromise settlement on the Swiss model set forth above, would have had to make concessions to the extent of renouncing several features of their independence. The Armenians, on the contrary, showed by their proposal that they were prepared to make no concessions, but insisted on the pure and simple incorporation in an Armenian State of a compact Greek population of over 700,000 souls, subject to a promise to grant them later on such a measure of autonomy as they might see fit to bestow.

Although this one-sided solution of the problem may appear satisfactory to the Armenians, it is naturally not acceptable to the Greeks. The reply of the latter to the Armenian proposition may be summed up as follows: "We are determined not to lose our ethnical independence at any price. We should have been ready to pool several of our interests with those of the Armenians, and to forego the advantages of several of the factors of our independence, in order to increase our combined power, but further than that we cannot go."

In the face of a determination so plainly and firmly expressed, the Armenians could not be able even to hope that they would find it an advantage, even from their own point of view, to incorporate by force and compel to remain under their

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domination a population who will have none of it. Such a solution would provide a source of continual discontent and a permanent cause of discord and disorders.

It is not within our province to discuss the reasons for the uncompromising attitude of the Armenians in refusing to accept the solution suggested by the Greek delegates. All that remains for us to do is to lay before the Peace Conference the two following requests:-

1.- The constitution and the recognition of the Independent Republic of the Euxine Pontus, as previously formulated by us. 'If, in the interval, our delegates have shown themselves disposed to agree to a real union with Armenia, the proposals we put forward to that end became null and void from the moment they were declined. It is evident, moreover, that the solution we proposed would have been advisable only in the event of the Armenians having accepted it willingly. On the other hand, the Armenians have repeatedly declared that the Greek Pontus interests them much less than the possibility of securing an outlet to the sea at Rizeh or Athina, and that under these circumstances they would welcome the organisation of an Independent State of Pontus, with whom they would entertain neighbourly relations).

2.- It is precisely this latter consideration which has determined us to formulate our second request, which is that (in the event of our ^{not} succeeding in our petition to be placed under the protection of Greece), the United States of America will be good enough to accept subsidiarily and shall have conferred upon it by the Peace Conference, for the administration of the Independent Republic of the Euxine Pontus, a mandate similar to that which we are informed it is disposed to accept for Armenia.

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In conclusion, after the failure of our efforts to come to a compromise with the Armenians - a failure which cannot be blamed to us - the Greeks of the Euxine Pontus once more vigorously reiterate their unshakeable determination to pursue a Greek existence in a country, that is, both Greek and independent.

This, obviously, would not prevent the organization at some future date of a confederation composed of several peoples in that part of the East, such as the Pontians, the Georgians, the Armenians, etc.,

Confident that satisfaction will be given to our legitimate claims and with our deepest gratitude to Your Excellencies in anticipation,

We have the honour to be

Yours Excellencies' Obedient Servants

SIGNED: Constantin Jasez Constantinides *Congrès des Originaires du Pont-Euxin.*

SIGNED: Socrate Cecoffinos



LE PRÉSIDENT

Le Président

Paris, May 15th, 1919.

J. J. J.