

"The Genocide of Anatolian Christians and the Destruction of Smyrna: Scholarship and the Evidence, Ninety Years Later"

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First of all I want to thank George Mavropoulos member of The Asia Minor and Pontos Hellenic Research Center and the members of the Pontian Greek Society for inviting me to address you once again. It is always a pleasure to visit this great mid-western center of Hellenism where I have so many friends and whose Greek-American community is in many ways a model for the rest of the nation. There is no question that the Pontians of Chicago are the most active Greek organization in the United States – if not the world – in promoting a broader awareness of the genocide of Anatolian Greeks and Christians. The latter remark is important, because their collaboration with diverse Greek communities, and with Assyrians, Armenians, Jews and other victims of state sponsored injustice and murder is a model for all to emulate.

Although, as a historian I am accustomed to studying and speaking about the past, the tragic events and the people we are here to remember, however, are no mere academic exercise. For me, it's all personal- because I am the son of Anatolians—my mother, Elli, was born in Boutza, a beautiful suburb of Smyrna one of Hellenism's great cosmopolitan centers which tragically, like so many others, no longer exists. I came to this subject because of a key—the key to our lost home—and, because, the Kastastrophe was something that I learned about as a child in a very personal way. My grandparents always hoped to go home to their chameni patrida—but they never did-- and today I will show you something that no one has seen in ninety years. (show doc 1) This refugee document was issued in Chios on October 31, 1922-- and the photograph is of the Linakis family including my mom at age two-- shortly after they fled the great Smyrna fire and the slaughter they narrowly escaped. For me, the document brings a grim reality to the events discussed here.

In the time that I have, I will try to do three things: (1) I will try to give you some idea of the progress that has been made, and the work that still needs to be done, concerning the study and recognition of the genocide of the Greeks of Asia Minor in

particular and of Anatolian Christianity in general; (2) I will reinforce and refresh some of the conclusions I have come to concerning the Turkish responsibility for the destruction of Smyrna in 1922 based on American evidence and what the US government knew about it; and finally, (3) I will talk a little about the exceptional humanity of a Japanese captain within the context of the Smyrna rescue efforts that should have been implemented at that time-- and were not.

In the last few years much progress has been made concerning the study and recognition of the Genocide of Ottoman Christians—others have spoken to you about the Armenians and other minorities-- I will confine my remarks to the Ottoman Greeks. A major accomplishment is that Thea Halo and Adam Jones have managed gain recognition of the Anatolian Greek and Pontian genocide from 1914 to 1923 by the International Association of Genocide scholars who adopted a resolution giving it equal status to that of Ottoman Armenians and Assyrians. It is remarkable, that Thea, a non-academic, accomplished this on her own through her passion and zeal without any substantial assistance from any Greek scholars. We all owe her a debt of gratitude and unbounded admiration.

Three important, major publications that have also recently appeared—that have documented and analyzed what took place in new and unprecedented ways and brought the study of the Greek genocide to an entirely new level. The first, is the huge, multi-volume collection of primary sources collected and published from many international archives by Konstantinos Fotiades on the genocide of the Pontian Greeks. It is a resource that enables all of us to document Turkish actions and their deadly and horrific impact from official and unofficial sources drawn from many countries. The second publication, is the recent work of Taner Akcam, who although focused on the Armenians, makes available a wide variety of unpublished official Turkish sources that exposes their systematic plans and methods of extermination and murder against all Christians; and the third and most recent book, is the unprecedented collection of extremely high level studies by an international team of scholars published by Aristide Caratzas-- specifically on the Genocide of the Ottoman Greeks. No one concerned with this subject can ignore this highly documented and multi-faceted mine of

information. As you will see, I will refer to it several times during this presentation because of the invaluable information it contains.

Other recent actions are the several important conferences which have brought scholars together to share their research on this subject. Although, I am certain that I am not aware of all of them, I will mention two—the first is a series in —in Athens and Komotini, Greece, called “Three Genocides One Strategy”—and the others are those held here in Chicago, by your own Pontian Society which also brought groups of scholars together to share their research on the genocide. It is my understanding that the conference papers from these Chicago conferences have been collected and are in the process of publication—and I fully expect that this book will be a welcome companion volume to that of Caratzas. It is hoped that the best studies of other scholarly international conferences will also soon find their way into print and add to our resources and knowledge.

Within the context of genocide studies there are two facts that are revealed for the first time by the Caratzas volume. The first, documented by the authoritative genocide scholar, Tessa Hofmann, is that that the term genocide was used in German sources from at least 1917 to describe what the Turks were doing to Asia Minor Greeks; and the second, is that, Steven Jacobs documents that Raphael Lemkin, the Polish-Jewish legal scholar who coined the term genocide as a legal-historical concept, studied and wrote about the Greek genocide and considered it part of the historical framework for this concept. Lemkin, we should note is also widely considered responsible for the adoption of the United Nations genocide legislation of 1947—a major accomplishment that remains in force today.

As we all know, Turkey still officially denies that any genocide took place, even though some courageous Turkish intellectuals have raised doubts about the truth of the official version of this dark page of their country’s past. It is still a crime to criticize Kemalism and Turkism there-- and most Turks believe that the deaths and “flight” of their non-Muslim minorities were the result of war and their disloyalty. When my Greek relatives visited our lost homeland near Smyrna—the young Turks they encountered

asked them “why did you leave” – as if they did it by choice. Additionally, although the U.S. government still refuses to recognize the murder of Anatolian Christians as genocide, 21 other countries have done so, and 43 states in the U.S. have passed resolutions granting recognition in one form or another. As Israel Charney and other scholars have repeatedly pointed out, genocide denial is actually the last stage of a genocide. In this sense, the continued denial of genocide by Turkey is not only a failure to come to terms with past actions but continues them into the present. It is only by a recognition of the truth, that nations and victims can move on and that any healing can begin to take place.

Finally, one also needs to recognize a broad historical reality that is too often ignored. This reality is that Greek communities in Asia Minor like Boutza and Smyrna no longer exist not because of some natural disaster, war, economic circumstance, or voluntary migration; but because of a deliberate, systematic policy which historians have identified as “Turkification.” While today we are discussing only the twentieth century—it is important to recognize that what took place at that time was the final stage of a larger historical process that had gone on for centuries. In Asia Minor, Turkification and de-Hellenization began during the fourteenth century and this earlier phase has been studied in great detail by my friend and colleague Speros Vryonis who has also illuminated the modern destruction of the Greek community of Constantinople in 1955. Today there are less than 5,000 ethnic Greeks left in what constitutes modern Turkey.

Now let me turn to the subject of my book and give you an overview of what our American sources tell us about the destruction of Smyrna during September 1922. It is tale of tragedy, greed, heroism—unprecedented suffering and murder on a massive scale—but also a time when individual Americans rose above government interest to commit what one courageous American woman called: “unauthorized acts of humanity!” As I have indicated, the destruction of Smyrna was the final act of a larger process. As the Armenians know well, this modern phase of massacres and so-called “deportations” began in the late 1800’s under Sultan Abdul Hamid (1878-1908). At that time, the Christian population within Asia Minor was estimated at over five million. Of these,

more than two million were Greeks. With the rise of Turkish nationalism after 1908, a deliberate and secret plan was put into effect to rid the empire of its non-Muslim minorities who were not perceived to be part of the new nation-state—whose nationalism was exclusively Muslim. This is the way a German eyewitness described what was going on in April 1909:

“The slaughter was unsparing, Greeks and Syrians were struck down with the Armenians. Entire families were burned to death in their homes. Hundreds of girls and women were maltreated and carried off to harems, where the women were separated from the men.”

The Balkan wars that preceded WWI accelerated this process whose institutions and procedures remained the same. Planned massacres utilizing some pretext were precipitated in many Greek towns, throughout the Pontus and Ionia, utilizing armed mobs of neighbors and outsiders who were promised the possessions of the victims. The brutality of what took place is hard to describe—many people were butchered with axes, and hacked to pieces while those more fortunate were simply hanged. From the very beginning, fire was used to murder innocent families in their homes or they were crowded into churches or some other location and burned alive. The Greek word holocaust is often used in this context. In other areas all the able bodied men were rounded up and put into what were called “labor battalions” the equivalent of slave labor gangs. Documents indicate that over 200,000 Greek men were forced into these battalions during 1914. The elderly, and women and children were forced to abandon their homes and “deported”—a code word—for a death march into the interior, where along the way they were starved, robbed, raped and tortured.

This is the way Lewis Einstein, a U.S. diplomat at Constantinople in 1915 described the situation:

“The persecution of the Greeks is assuming unexpected proportions. Only A fortnight ago they were reassured and told that the measures taken against the Greek villages in the Marmora were temporary and not comparable with those against the Armenians. Now it looks as if there is to be equality in suffering, and the intension is to uproot and destroy both peaceful communities. The poor Greeks are obliged to leave their homes, often without any notice and compelled to march night and day without food or water, and when they cry for this, their Turkish guards point to the mosque and tell them the highroad to the comforts of life lies in Islam.”

Thousands died from privation or were outright murdered along the roads- and we have numerous reports by American missionaries and diplomats who saw and even photographed the rotting corpses while desperately trying to help the unfortunate victims. Greek government statistics indicated that the loss of life was estimated to be at 700,000 by the end of 1921.

In 1914, 50,000 Greeks were “deported” from the Smyrna district and thousands of men were placed in labor battalions. It was only because of the presence of so many Europeans and because of German intervention in 1916 that more were not deported and massacred from that area during the war. With the defeat of the Ottoman Empire during WWI, the victors forced the Ottoman government to hold trials to judge those leaders who were responsible for perpetuating such heinous crimes against humanity. For a brief period, secret documents and eyewitness testimony exposed their monstrous plans to the world. However, when in 1919 the Greeks were authorized to land troops to protect the surviving Greek communities in the Smyrna region, a new Turkish leader, Kemal Ataturk turned defeat into victory and not only were the previous crimes covered up, but new waves of massacre and deportations were implemented. For example, Kemal established so-called “courts of Independence,” in the areas under his control which executed thousands of Greeks. Sixty persons a day were hanged in the Pontus during September 1921 according to British sources.

Given all of this background it should come as no surprise that Smyrna, despite its large European population and status as Turkey’s most cosmopolitan city, was dealt with in same way as the rest of the Christian communities of Asia Minor. What was different, however, was that it all took place while the world watched and powerful military resources, in fact 27 European ships including three American destroyers stood by in the harbor, watched, and let it all happen.

The destruction of the city of Smyrna and the murder of a large portion of its Christian population made worldwide headlines during the month of September 1922, 90 years ago. For almost a month, more than a quarter of a million people suffered every base act of cruelty known to man. In many cases, those killed outright, were more fortunate than many others who remained alive only to be tortured and suffer a painful

and slow death. A martyr's death was also the fate of Chrysostomos, the city's Greek metropolitan and spiritual leader, who was literally torn to pieces by a Turkish mob at the instigation of the Turkish military governor. Thousands flocked to the city's long waterfront and begged to be taken aboard the many western ships that stood by watching this horrible spectacle without lifting a finger to help. These unfortunates were still there praying to God for divine intervention when on the fourth day of the slaughter the Christian portions of the city were consumed by flames. The great fire lasted for three days and not only forced the Greeks and Armenians from their hiding places, but obliterated the evidence of thousands of rotting corpses in the homes and narrow streets of the city.

Practically all of the American and British newspapers of the time held the army of Kemal Ataturk directly responsible for the massacre of thousands of innocent civilians and the setting of the great fire. In fact, Kemal himself was present and in total control of his forces. These inhuman acts of barbarism were also condemned by many foreign observers who wrote about them or described them in interviews to the press. In their opinion, the fire and the massacres were part of an organized plan designed to solve the minority problem and cover up the murders that had taken place. Others more familiar with the history of the region also recognized that this destruction would result in the complete Turkification of Smyrna. The phrase "Turkey for the Turks" is heard over and over again in the sources.

Yet, even while the ruins of this ancient Christian city were still smoldering, the despicable minions of commercial interest worked hand in hand with the Turkish government to minimize the tragedy and absolve the Kemalists of all responsibility. For, in 1922, Turkey controlled the rich oil fields of Mosul, now part of Iraq, a precious prize which Kemal dangled before each of the western powers. Today, the Turkish government still denies that any systematic massacres of Greeks and Armenians took place in Smyrna and incredible as it may seem to some, it also claims that the fire that destroyed the Christian sections of the city was deliberately set by Greeks and/or Armenians.

It was in order to shed some light on these issues, that in the 1990's I decided to collect and study as many published and unpublished American eyewitness accounts

as I could find. Like many other before me, I thought that the American material was particularly important because America had not gone to war with Turkey, was a neutral power, and had no territorial ambitions there in 1922. As I found out however, this did not mean that the U.S. did not also have commercial and other interests that it sought to protect, and caused it to act in ways that were both shocking and deplorable. America had a major commercial and philanthropic presence in Smyrna which consisted of large two schools, a YMCA and a YWCA, an oil refinery, as well as a Consulate. Certainly some of the people employed there, I reasoned must have left some reliable account of what they saw and experienced.

I was not disappointed, for even a systematic reading of the New York Times for the month of September 1922 yielded valuable information. For example, on September 7th, the New York Times carried an interview with the Rev. S. Harlow, professor of history at the American College in Smyrna who had just arrived in New York. In this article he relates details of Turkish massacres he says took place outside of the city in which American friends were killed. For example, he states that:

“The Turks are so pleased with their slaughter that they even have official pictures taken of the tortures and massacres. I had a lot of these official pictures which I gave to an American Consul to send to Washington. They show the Turkish Governor of a province, a Turkish General and the high priests and other officials, dressed in their best, smiling and looking on at the executioner performing his tortures below them.”

What really happened to the city of Smyrna is still a controversial subject today. However, two recently published studies on the subject, that of Giles Milton, entitled, *Paradise Lost: Smyrna 1922* and Nikolaos Hlamides' detailed article in the Caratzas volume have added much information to that gleaned from my own research in our national archives. Milton makes information available drawn from the records of the wealthy foreign “Levantine” community of Smyrna for the first time, and Hlamides adds Turkish and British eyewitness accounts to the story not previously used.

The basic facts of what happened are the following: On September 8th, after all Greek troops had left the city, Kemal's Turkish Nationalists entered and took

over. The military authorities appeared to be in full control and assured the European representatives and the terrified 300,000 Christians who had crowded into the city that everyone would be safe. Almost immediately however, looting and murder began to take place. The suburbs were attacked by organized cheatas (irregular troops) and armed civilians who raped and murdered hundreds of unarmed civilians. Even Christian graves were opened and the bones of the dead defaced. Foreigners were also murdered in their homes as we know from official and unofficial eyewitness. Churches and priests were special targets--- one American professor who lived near a priest's home, wrote that he saw the unfortunate cleric crucified on the door of his house in a "Christlike" pose. An organized attack also began against the Armenian section of the city—and people were murdered in their homes as organized mobs and regular troops supposedly searched for hidden weapons. During the next four days, the pillage spread and accelerated into all the Christian sections of the large city. Only buildings that belonged to and were clearly identified as foreign (American, British, French, Dutch, Italian etc..) were supposed to be spared—although, sometimes "mistakes" were made. The large fleet of foreign commercial and military ships in the harbor were instructed by their governments not to intervene or interfere with this Turkish slaughter. With only a few small exceptions, which I will talk about later—they watched what took place, and only allowed those with foreign papers to embark and get away.

Prior to the Turkish entry—fearing massacres—U.S. Consul Horton had wired the State Dept. and asked for American mediation to protect the helpless minorities in the city—the U.S. government said no. Metropolitan Chrysostomos did the same thing – asking for Great power intervention—through the Greek Patriarch—no was his answer also. Horton, however, took local independent action and gathered food and supplies anticipating the starvation and hardships the

refugees would suffer. An ad-hoc American relief committee of heroes drawn from philanthropic organizations, business men and educators was established. A YMCA man, Asa Jennings also took over several buildings near the waterfront and gave refuge to any Christian who had an American connection of any kind. To his credit, even Admiral Bristol, realizing the magnitude of the coming refugee disaster ordered his destroyers to aid this small band of American heroes.

Almost immediately, it became clear that Turkish troops were also gathering up any able bodied Greek and Armenian men from all over the city. Those not immediately killed were put in what the sources call concentration camps. From there, they were either systematically murdered or placed into slave labor gangs and sent into the interior where most died after numerous hardships. Young women and even girls from the American College, were abducted, raped and if not immediately murdered, placed in special houses for the pleasure of the conquering troops. Several American eyewitnesses attest to this fact, and one businessman was invited by a Turkish soldier to come see how they make them dance.

On September 12th, Consul Horton sent a report to Washington which stated the following:

“It would be impossible to say how many people, chiefly Armenians, have been shot or stabbed but persons walking through the streets in that part of the town, report seeing dead bodies everywhere. A party of Americans saw nine cartloads of dead bodies being carried off in the neighborhood of the Konak, and another party saw three such cartloads in the neighborhood of Point Station..... I will just mention that this morning three little girls, whose parents were murdered last night, were brought into the Y.W.C.A.....

During the next two days the situation became much worse as thousands more were systematically murdered and sent to concentration camps. On the 13th of September Turkish troops deliberately set fire to the European sections of the city and made sure that it spread through the use of petrol. Fleeing the flames, over

two hundred thousand, desperate and terrified refugees and Smyrna residents gathered along the city's long waterfront in order to escape the flames and begged the ships anchored in the harbor to let them escape by sea. What did the mighty fleet do—they watched thousands of people burn and be butchered. The Turks set up guns and cavalry on both ends of the waterfront to make certain that no one could leave undetected and then systematically raped, robbed and murdered their victims at will. Sailors reported using searchlights at night to try to calm people down and more than one instance they even saw petrol being sprinkled on people who were then burned alive.

Instead of stopping the slaughter or picking up the thousands of victims who swam out to the ships—several ships played music in order to help drown out the screams coming from the shore. Not even foreign consulates were spared from the fire—in one of the official American reports—Vice Consul Barnes reports seeing Turkish soldiers at the entrance to the US Consulate spreading gasoline shortly before the building caught fire. Yet in the same report—he tells his superiors he did not think the Turks deliberately started the fire and was unsure who was responsible!!

Many eyewitness reports describe the horrible scene. A British newspaper man reported what he saw from one of the ships:

“What I see as I stand on the deck of the *Iron Duke* is an unbroken wall of fire, two miles long, in which twenty distinct volcanoes of raging flames are throwing up jagged, writhing tongues to a height of a hundred feet. Against this curtain of fire, which blocks out the sky, are silhouetted the towers of the Greek churches, the domes of the mosques, and the flat square roofs of the houses. All Smyrna's warehouses, business buildings, and European residences, with other others behind them burned like furious torches. From this intensely glowing mass of yellow, orange and crimson fire pour up thick clotted coils of oily black smoke that hide the moon at its zenith. The sea glows a deep copper red, and, worst of all, from the densely packed mob of many thousands of refugees huddled on the narrow quay,

between the advancing fiery death behind and the deep water in front scream....”
(Hlamides in Caratzas page 208)

This is how a French source described the scene:

“...Thousands of unfortunate people crowding along the waterfront fell into the sea. A great part of the port has been filled with hundreds of corpses that one could walk upon them. Those floating on water were finished off by Turks with swords and wood [clubs].. The most terrible of all is that this orgy of blood, disaster and various other crimes took place under the eyes, frequently the spiteful smiles and even the cheers of the foreign war ships, or the official representatives of the foreign powers...

The same (French) consul himself invited to dinner,...excused himself for his delay of a few minutes with these terrible words: “*Because*” he said, “*the motor-launch in which I was on my way from the French war ship hit continuously upon the floating corpses of Greek women.*” And the American consul [George Horton] listening to this cynical excuse, spited himself for being a human being..” (Hofmann, page 88 in Caratzas volume).

Finally, a British seaman recorded the following eyewitness account in his diary:

“..Rape and looting was now the order of the day in Smyrna and human life was not worth a farthing. Two young women were seized by the Turks and after being raped their breasts were cut off and they were laid in the roadway... Two Turks held a Greek while a third one ran his bayonet through the poor devil’s stomach. Many bodies were hung by the neck to the trees and the harbor was littered with dead bodies... With the approach of night the panic increased and so did the fire and by midnight 200,000 souls were between the blazing Hades and the deep sea. Turkish cavalry were stationed to each end of the front so that escape was an impossibility. The people were cut down right and left by the soulless devils, who had broken their promise, and the scene can only be described as worse than hell. Shrieking women calling to unresponsive children who were beyond answering, children of tender age calling for parents who [sic] hearts had left their bloodstains on Turkish swords, such were the horrible scenes witnessed. Now and again a cavalryman would take a fancy to a young girl of fifteen or sixteen, drag her away and then a ghastly scream would tell its own story... Right along the sea front was a

wall

of unbroken fire with flames 100 feet high, casting a lurid glow in the sky...”
(Hlamides in Caratzas volume, pp. 210-11)

In the midst of this hell which Consul Horton said make him ashamed he was a member of the human race—there appeared a still anonymous heroic Japanese captain who did not care about politics or commerce but acted to save the lives of the innocent victims without regard to nationality, unlike all of the other ships in the harbor who simply watched the horror!!

A newspaper interview by an eyewitness as reported in the *Boston Globe* reports the following:

“Ms. Anna Harlow Birge, wife of professor Birge of the International College At Smyrna, tells of an incident when Smyrna was being burned. The desperate refugees were crowding each other off the wharves, and the harbor was full of men and women swimming around in the hope of rescue until they drowned. In the harbor at that time was a Japanese freighter which had just arrived, Loaded to the decks with a very valuable cargo of silks, laces and china, representing many thousands of dollars. The Japanese captain, when he realized the situation did not hesitate. The whole cargo went overboard into the dirty waters of the harbor, and the freighter was loaded with several hundred refugees, who were taken to the Piraeus and landed safely on Greek shores...” *Boston Globe, December 3, 1922.*

The same information is also mentioned in an official dispatch dated September 18, 1922 that Consul Horton sent to Washington from Athens when he fled there with American survivors. He wrote that: “A Japanese boat brought off some refugees and I have heard threw overboard some of their cargo for the purpose. Passengers on this ship speak in the highest terms of kindness of the Japanese officers and crew.”

To these accounts, today I will add two more from survivors who were saved by that heroic ship— which to my knowledge, have never been discussed in public before. The first is a note sent to me in 2008 by my friend Bill Theo, President of the Asia Minor Memorial Society in New York City. The note reads:

“My friend’s mother was nine years old when her family were rescued by a Japanese ship. She recounted seeing dead bodies being thrown overboard into the sea—before they reached Piraeus.”

More details are also given by another friend and colleague, Dan Georgakas, the noted labor historian, whose mother was saved by that still unknown Japanese ship. In an email he sent to me last Monday he writes:

“My mother Sophia (Pousoukas) and her only brother George were saved by that ship. She was approximately 11 years old and he two years younger. They lived a day or so outside of Smyrna and were abandoned by their Guardians or perhaps just got lost in the panic. They walked for several days to get to Smyrna. They were hiding a lot of time and just stumbling forward....

She never gave many details other than saying how the Europeans had abandoned them. They were taken out in a small boat and she thought the Japanese looked like djin (genies/fairies), but the good kind. They were fed rice and taken to Athens...” *personal email sent to me on Sept. 10, 2012.*

Dan also relates that even during the difficult days of the Second World War, his mother never forgot her Japanese saviors, and always found ways to remember their compassion and kindness.

It is about time that the Greek community properly acknowledged the humanity of those heroic Japanese sailors—a recognition that is long overdue. I commend the members of Asia Minor and Pontos Hellenic Research Center, the Pontian Society of Chicago, the Greek Consul and other representatives here today for doing so.

There is much confusion about what happened next among some researchers of the Smyrna tragedy which I can only briefly outline here today. Only this Japanese ship picked up people without regard to nationality some time during the first two days of the great fire. Reports of other refugees being saved refer primarily to those who could prove foreign citizenship or some direct connection to a foreign

institution. Soon thereafter, while the fire was still burning, small numbers of non-foreigners were picked up by a few American and British ships. By the time the fire began to smolder on September 16th however, there were still at least 200,000 people on the waterfront praying for ships to rescue them.

At this point the Turks realized that they could not kill Christians fast enough and “deport” enough people to make the minorities disappear. So Mustapha Kemal issued an order that all Christians had to leave by the end of September or else be “deported” into the interior which of course meant death. Horton and the American naval commander had repeatedly asked the Turks to allow Greek ships from the neighboring islands to sail into the harbor and pick people up. Permission was finally granted on September 23rd. It was at this point that a courageous young American, Asa Jennings, a YMCA man, played a heroic role. He found a large number of Greek ships anchored at the island of Mytiline where he had gone for supplies. He was the right man in the right place at the right time! On his own, he convinced the Greek government that he was acting under official American orders and that the Turks would not attack the rescue fleet if they came into Smyrna flying no flag and with an American naval escort. This is in fact what happened. Jennings led this rescue effort with eight ships on September 24th which grew to nineteen on September 26th. The last week of September was like a Greek “Dunkirk.” Using anything that could float, “admiral” Jennings’ Greek-American fleet succeeded in saving 140,000 souls including my mother and her family. Official statistics indicate that about 190,000 Christians—mostly Greek Anatolians were rescued from the Smyrna waterfront by the deadline, which indicates that over 100,000 were slaughtered and “deported.” The Turks searched everyone before letting them depart—and no male between the ages of 15 and 50 was allowed to leave. Sons, fathers and brothers were torn from their families—most of whom were never seen again!

By the time the Turkification process was over—and similar rescue fleets picked up Christians from all over the Asia Minor coast—over a million mostly Greek refugees had fled to Greece. To appreciate the impact upon poor and war-torn Greece—you have to understand that its entire population before this happened was about 3 million. Now they had to care for and integrate a huge number of destitute refugees—mostly elderly, women and children without male breadwinners into their society. This was the greatest rescue effort and migration in western history—yet it remains almost completely unknown and little studied. In 1923 a new treaty between Greece and Turkey legalized the Turkification of Asia Minor and Thrace through a so-called exchange of populations. It took decades for the million plus refugees to be integrated into Greek society—but eventually the shantytowns disappeared and the refugees transformed modern Greece.

Today there should be no doubt about who burned Smyrna, why this was done, and why so many innocent people were massacred and expelled. Utilizing the U.S. National Archives I have found several key official and originally secret documents that prove it-- and also show that the U.S. government knew this at the time and covered it up. I call this a kind of “Smyrnagate,” and it is the subject of my new article currently in press in a book of conference papers to be published by the Asia Minor and Pontos Hellenic Research Center. Also, the recently published Caratzas volume which I have already referred to makes Turkish eyewitness accounts available for the first time which confirm these American sources. Limited time however does not allow me to go into these matters. Thank you for your kind attention and for your presence here today.