

The Testimony of Mikhail Vasilievich Frunze (1885-1925) Concerning the Tragedy of Pontic Hellenism

JOHN NICOLOPOULOS

INTRODUCTION

At the time of his mission to Ankara, covered in this part of M. V. Frunze's diary, the author was 36 years old, and at the height of his remarkable career as a revolutionary political and military leader. He was deputy chairman of the Council of People's Commissars of the Ukrainian SSR, member of the Ukrainian politburo and commander-in-chief of all Soviet forces in the Ukraine and the Crimea. He had just brought the Russian civil war to a brilliantly successful conclusion in favor of the Bolsheviks, by throwing the last White forces under Baron Wrangel into the sea, after having taken a hand in defeating earlier threats to the revolution, from the attempted Kornilov coup in the summer of 1917 to the counter-revolutionary regime of Admiral A. V. Kolchak in the Urals and Siberia. As an aside, he had established Soviet power in Central Asia by liquidating the local nationalist governments in Turkestan, Khiva, and Bukhara.

A couple of years later, only one year before his untimely death in 1925, he was to be appointed People's Commissar for Military and Naval Affairs of the USSR, Chief of Staff of the Red Army and head of the Military Academy, which bears his name to the present day. In January, 1925, he also assumed the post of Chairman of the Revolutionary Military Council of the USSR and was elected a candidate member of the Politburo.

He was of mixed and humble enough background — his father had been a Moldavian paramedic, his mother Russian — he belonged to that category of fresh reinforcements to the turn of the century revolutionary intelligentsia that provided Lenin with the backbone of his remarkable organization. Following completion of his secondary schooling in Vernyi (today Alma Ata, capital of the Republic of Kazakhstan), he was admitted to the elite Saint Petersburg Polytechnic Institute on

the very eve of the Revolution of 1905, which cut short his academic career: he joined the Bolshevik party, participated in the revolutionary struggle, and spent a couple of years on underground party assignments until he was arrested in 1907. The next eight years he attended the "university of jail and exile," from which he emerged during World War I ready for important missions. His assignment to do party agitation in the Army with his headquarters in Minsk, in 1916, was to be the beginning of his brilliant military-political career.

Needless to say, the testimony of such a man on any of the events of that period in which he played such a prominent role is of special value. We are lucky that it was he who took upon himself the delicate assignment of reaching an accord with Kemal Atatürk's nationalist revolutionary regime in Turkey: lucky, because his traveller's diary to and from Ankara in the winter of 1921-22 provides the historian today with one more incontrovertible testimonial of the tragic fate of the Pontic Greeks who were being subjected to mass genocide at that very moment.

Finally, the fact that Mikhail Frunze, in spite of the horrors he had witnessed in the revolution and civil war in his own country, and in spite of all Turkish efforts to present their behavior as uncontrolled reprisals against worse Greek atrocities in Western Anatolia, reacted so vigorously against his Turkish allies' treatment of the Pontians testifies not only in favor of his own human sensibilities, but against Turkish-style genocidal "final solutions." Alas, the "Turkish" method of dealing with unwanted minorities found many imitators in the course of our century, from Adolf Hitler to Joseph Stalin and his Campuchean understudy, Pol Pot. The world's conscience, however, even at the cost of painful vacillations and tortuous reappraisals, followed the example set by Frunze on his melancholy ride through the ravaged Pontic countryside.

For the historian, indeed, Frunze's diary is a treat beyond his faithful depiction of Turkish efforts to rationalize the on-going genocide and his own Bolshevik view of the conflict as a result of the cynical manipulation of the naive and unsuspecting agriculture population by Western powers. What stands out irrepressibly is Frunze's masterful eyewitness reporting. And it soon becomes apparent, in the course of the narrative, that the internal contradictions between his perceptions and the rationalizations he conscientiously attempts to articulate can only be resolved in one way — direct action in favor of the victims.

Trip to Ankara

FROM BATUM TO SAMSUN — November 26-30, 1921

On November 26 our Ukrainian mission arrived on Turkish territory. We landed in the city of Trebizond, having made the crossing from Baku on the Italian steamship "Sannago." It took only one night. It is a big ship which once belonged to the Austrian Lloyd and which, along with the Austrian merchant and passenger fleet, passed into the hands of the Italians. Both crew and officers showed an extremely polite and friendly disposition toward us. In the crew's quarters I noticed the portrait of comrade Lenin. This obviously means something, but perhaps not too much, since it hangs there in peaceful coexistence with the portraits of certain big-wigs, apparently members of the Italian royal family.

The original plan was to go to the port of Inebolu (West of Sinop) from which there is a hard-surface road to Ankara, which also happens to be the shortest — 305 versts. But from our discussion with the captain it became clear that he could not absolutely guarantee a landing of the mission at Inebolu as the Black Sea has already entered the stormy season and, in case of bad weather, it is impossible to land there. There is no port at all, the bay is completely open, and approaching the shore is extremely dangerous. In such a case, we would be faced with the pleasant perspective of finding ourselves not in Ankara, but in Constantinople, where we would have the pleasure of meeting, instead of the Ankara government, Sir Herbert Harrington. . . .

Here [in Trebizond], there used to be many trading firms, generally owned by Greeks and even Armenians; there were also commercial representatives of all countries, etc. At the present time, however, because of the war, all this has gone into full decline. Import and export activity is minimal and most of the commercial houses have closed down, partly for economic and partly for political reasons. The heart of the matter is that the Greeks, who are the main commercial element here and who constitute an important part of the population of the city itself as well as of the entire coastal section of the vilayet, have been subjected lately to a series of repressions. These repressions have been caused by the Greeks' hostile attitude toward the Turkish government, their reluctance to meet their obligations for military service, and attempts by certain elements in the Greek population to agitate for the

* Comrade M. V. Frunze's diary, *Sobranie Sochinenii* (Moscow-Leningrad, 1929), vol. 1, pp. 274-348, was written during his trip to Turkey as ambassador extraordinary of the Ukrainian Republic for the purpose of concluding a treaty with Turkey. The manuscript of the diary is kept in M. V. Frunze's office at the Frunze Military Academy of the Red Army.

restoration of the Pontic state, with its capital in Trebizond or Samsun. These essentially groundless dreams (the Greek population is in the minority everywhere), supported principally by agitation for Athens and Stambul, have done great harm to the area and, above all, to the Greek population. Ethnic groups which formerly lived side by side in peace have been turned into bitter enemies and the struggle between them has assumed the most cruel and bloody forms. As a result, the Greek population of the Turkish Black Sea coast has been decimated. Only women and children have been left in the cities. All male population from the age of sixteen up has been mobilized into special work detachments and sent deep into the hinterland (to Erzerum, Sivas, Ankara), where they are used in road building and the construction of fortifications.

Except for the Russian, there are no other foreign consulates in the city at this time. The opening of the French Consulate, for which a building has already been set aside, is expected for the very near future. The city is situated in a very picturesque manner on the slopes of the mountains, and its last houses reach down to the sea. The mountains surrounding the city are not very high and are almost completely deforested; only here and there do we see patches of undergrowth and a few small stands of cypress. From the Eastern side, very close to the city, one can see the remnants of old buildings, clinging to the sheer cliffs. It is the ruins of an old Greek monastery from the time of the Crusades. Trebizond is an old, historical city. It was the capital of ancient Pontos. It is here that the Greek detachments who survived the battle between Kyros the Younger and Artaxerxes reached the sea, a march described by the Greek historian Xenophon.

.....

From the point of view of ethnic composition, the street crowds seem to be fairly uniform. The mass of the city population consists of Turks, who stand out because of their traditional head gear, the red fez. The fez, however, is not only worn by the Turks, but also by the Greeks. But very few of the latter are left in the city, as I have already pointed out. The next important group are the Laz. They represent the main mass of the village population of the South-East, i.e. Turkish, coast of the Black Sea. They are distinguished by their special head gear, a kerchief tied around the head in the manner of a turban. The prevailing color of these kerchiefs is dark and sometimes yellow-gray. The Lazes are Turkified Georgians. They have almost completely lost consciousness of their previous nationality and have become the firmest supporters of Turkish state interests in the area. There are no more than half a million of them. They are an extremely brave and hard-working people, extremely suitable for military service. They fulfill their

role of defenders of Islam and the Turkish state not only in Lazistan, but in other parts of Turkey as well. For example, recently, one of the most influential Lazistan chieftains, Osman-Aga, with a detachment of Laz volunteers passed the Kurdish provinces of Eastern Anatolia which had rebelled against the Turks through fire and sword. He did the same to the Greek regions of the Sandjak of Samsun. His detachment established order in the Eastern manner — that is to say he left behind him a desert. Everywhere the silence of the grave and perfect “order.” It must be said that in general the means of resolving national disputes practiced by all ethnic groups which make up the population of contemporary Turkey, without exception, are the same and very simple: they amount to the total destruction of the opponent. And in this the Christian side, in the person of the Greeks, has a considerable lead. That which I heard here concerning the feats of Constantine’s troops in the areas occupied by them defy all description. They not only took the entire male population prisoner to Greece, but they systematically burn and raze entire villages. Crowds of Turkish refugees who have lost everything are now filling Constantinople and Anatolia in general.

.....
SAMSUN

(p. 287)

The population of the city is mixed: Turks, Greeks, and a few Armenians. Until very recently, up to the eruption of the Greek uprising in the Samsun region, Turks and Greeks were about equal in number. Now there are absolutely no Greek men. As in Trebizond, they were all mobilized and sent to work deep into the hinterland. In general, the Turkish population of Samsun has sharply risen in proportion to the others: they now make up no less than 18-20,000 of the total of 27,000. The population of the region nearest the city also is — or rather was — of a mixed character: Turks, Greeks, Circassians, and Kurds. The Greeks were in the majority. But since last year, after the uprising, we can say that the Greek population in the villages just does not exist. The area surrounding the city, once extremely prosperous, is now an almost complete desert. Starting from the city itself, along all the main roads to Bafra, Amasia, and Tcharshamba and for a distance of 25 to 30 versts from the city, not one Greek village has survived, and few of the Muslim ones. The struggle between the Greeks and the Turks took, as is usual here, the form of total mutual extermination and transformed a flourishing district into ruins. At the time of our arrival, after a whole series of punitive expeditions and bloody reprisals against the whole Greek population, the uprising is considered suppressed, although thousands of surviving Greeks, often with their women and children, have escaped into the mountains from which they occasionally stage raids against Turkish outposts and villages. From what could be

ascertained, it seems that the uprising was organized and led by agents from Athens and Stambul, with the political objective of creating a Greek (Pontic) state on the coast of the Black Sea, as a protectorate of Greater Greece. Immediate impulse to the uprising was provided by the mobilization proclaimed by the authorities in the beginning of 1921.

(p. 288)

The Samsun region was famous for its tobacco industry. Tobacco growing is, indeed, one of the main elements of the agricultural economy of the surrounding villages. The tobacco of Samsun is considered the best of all Turkish tobaccos.

At the present time, in connection with the Imperialist war and particularly the above-mentioned uprising, this branch of the economy was dealt a powerful blow . . .

Thanks to the kindness of the Samsun mutesarif Faik-Bey, I was able to visit the factory itself and become acquainted with its present condition. There are about 300 workers at this time, although considerably more worked here before. The majority of the workers are women (mainly Greek) and children. Some of the children are 9-10 years old. The pay is 10-12 piastres (for children) to 1 lira (for specialized workers) per day, with the price for a pound of bread in Samsun at 6 piastres. The factory produces about 3 million cigarettes a day . . . It used to belong to the French firm "Regie," which monopolized all tobacco production in Turkey. Today it belongs to the government . . .

FROM SAMSUN TO CHORUM

(pp. 297-98)

. . . At the floor of the last and most important rise before the pass, I, along with the mounted askers, turned into a path providing a shortcut across a series of hair-pin curves of the road. At the very turn we encountered a body. It was a dead man, dressed in the ordinary garb of a Turkish peasant — blue trousers and vest, with peasant sandals on his feet. His skull was broken, and we could see a bullet wound in his back. It was obvious that he had been killed very recently — half an hour or an hour before we passed by. My askers consulted together, and then one of them got off his horse and, approaching the dead man, unbuttoned his pants and started searching for something. Observing this, I thought: "Could it be that they are tempted by something in this poor man's rags?" Suddenly, I heard the asker exclaim: "Rum!" — following which he got back on his horse with a satisfied air. I then understood that my escort wanted to determine the nationality of the dead man, and had done so by checking the well-known characteristic which distinguishes Muslims from Christians. "Rum" means Greek. That is the name which Turks and, in general, inhabitants of

Anatolia give to the Anatolian Greeks, as opposed to the Greeks of mainland Greece who are known to the Turks as "Yunan." We continued our ascent. With an uneasy feeling, the head of the escort, an old asker with a big mustache and a serious, austere face, ordered all troops to ride with rifles at the ready, and he himself, placing his rifle across the saddle, rode out ahead looking carefully to both sides. Not far from the top of the pass we met a Turkish post consisting of 12 gendarmes. It was housed in a dilapidated hut. Such posts are called "karakol" and they are set up 10-12 versts apart. At this "karakol" we learned that at dawn there had been a clash with a small Greek band which had come down to the road in search of prey. The body we had seen had been abandoned by the band in the course of its retreat.

.....
(p. 301)

... At the bottom of the ravine, near a stone bridge spanning a small but rapid mountain stream, we came across a group of half-ruined, abandoned structures. They were the remains of large karavan-sarais destroyed by the raids of Greek bands.

As we passed this place, Hamid gesticulating excitedly, started recounting the methods employed by the bands of Greek rebels. They hide in inaccessible mountain fastnesses, where they live in caves and dug-outs from where they venture, especially at night, to fall upon Turkish villages and travellers on the road.

As almost the entire Muslim male population is away with the army, these raids are usually successful and, as a result, the majority of Turkish villages in the area have been burnt and destroyed and their inhabitants have been killed. The government organized, in the summer of 1921, a series of punitive expeditions which, in their turn, settled accounts cruelly with the population of all the Greek villages of the region.

As we were talking in this manner, we approached a village whose houses were scattered in a wide space to the left of the valley.

"Burada, burada rum-köyü!" — ("There, there — a Greek village") pointed out to me by one of the askers.

I stopped, raised my binoculars and looked carefully. The village was huge, more than 300 houses. The houses had two floors, the lower half was built of stone and they were covered with red tiles. There were no fences. Around them, the silence of the tomb — there were no people, no animals, no birds. I told the askers that I wanted to have a closer look at the village. We turned off the road, crossed the stream and rode up the slope along which the village was spread out. Before our eyes there unfolded a picture of terrible devastation: doors and windows had been broken in; near the houses there were scattered broken pieces

of various household effects, agricultural instruments, and the skeletons of animals and people. I dismounted and looked inside one of the houses: the same picture of destruction and desolation, the same remains of corpses, covered with rotting rags.

I asked the askers what happened to the women and children. They answered that most of them ran away into the mountains along with the men, but that some had been killed. Here are the consequences of the Greek-Turkish quarrel, created and supported by the efforts of the "enlightened" and "cultured" Entente, on the peaceful agricultural population.

We rode on. The sun was already beginning to set and in the ravine it is getting dark. The weather cleared up towards evening, the clouds scattered, a strong fresh wind blew, and all around us nature beckoned in all its beauty. But here, death, decomposition, sheer, wild terror. It weighs on the soul, and you want to escape as soon as possible from this enormous, horribly silent tomb. We rode away at full gallop. We reached the top of the pass . . . To the right and left of us a string of white mountain-tops stretch to the horizon. Lower down there are thick woods, here and there separated by large and small meadows. And, here and there, a series of villages, now scattered in the mountain gorges, now climbing upwards, almost to the very mountain-tops. But, alas, most of them obviously present the same picture as the Greek village of Karadağ-köy which we have just visited. There is not a single sign of life anywhere: no smoke is blowing over the tile roofs, no people, no animals, no birds, again no sign of the work of human hands in the fields next to the houses. Only in one village, near the karakol, are there any signs of life. My companions explain that it has been resettled with Turkish refugees from Western Anatolia occupied by the Greek army . . .

FROM KESKIN TO ANKARA — December 11-13, 1921 (pp. 312-31)

Arrived in Keskin around six in the evening of the 11th . . . Keskin is a small town of about 1500 houses, scattered along the banks of a small mountain river and on the slopes of the neighboring hills. The houses are mainly two-story, some with European pretensions — porches, verandas, etc. The explanation is that Keskin was largely inhabited by Greeks, many of whom carried out large trading operations and were quite well off. Keskin was also the residence of a Greek bishop. But all this "was," as, at present, because of the Greek-Turkish war, life has been turned upside down, all the male population, as everywhere, has been mobilized and sent to labor battalions, and trade has been torn out of the hands of the Greeks and killed by cruel requisitions, confiscations, etc. The majority of houses in the city is still,

however, occupied by the Greeks, but only women and children live there. In Keskin and its region the Greek-Turkish dispute took milder forms than elsewhere because the Keskin bishop took a loyal position vis-a-vis the Turkish government.

The windows of these houses were full of curious faces of women and children watching us ride through town. In contrast to the Turks, who everywhere give us a friendly reception, they are closed and silent. Dressed in the European manner, they bring to mind our little provincial towns — and the very type of their faces differs little from that of the inhabitants of the towns in our Southern Ukraine. Looking at them, I involuntarily felt my thoughts return home. Among the young women there occur very beautiful faces, but on all of them there is an expression of certain humiliation and apathy. The faces of the older Greek women stand out sharply with their expression of profound spiritual torment, with sorrow frozen in the traits of their faces and in their eyes. All this is the result of the tragic struggle now unfolding in the mountains and fields of Western Anatolia.

(pp. 325-26)

. . . The Turks complain of the burdens of war, but, at the same time, they think that there is no other way out of the present situation. This conclusion is forced upon them by the sight of tens of thousands of Turkish refugees from the areas occupied by the Greeks — refugees who have not only lost their property, but also their near ones, killed by the Greeks. What has been happening recently in Western Anatolia defies description. Here the warring sides relate to each other in the same way that nations related in the times of Attila and Ghengis Khan. Led partially by the feeling of revenge, but, principally, by political calculation, the Greeks systematically are destroying all the Turkish population of the Smyrna and Brussa vilayets.

In several kazas, from 90,000-100,000 previous Turkish populations, there remain only a few thousand. Whole cities, Aidin for example, have been destroyed, and from its previous Turkish population of 50,000 people there have been left only a few hundred. All the rest have either been killed or become refugees. It is enough to read even the short report of the international commission sent from Constantinople by the friend of the Greeks, the English general Harrington, to the region of Brussa, so as to become convinced of the incredible cruelties committed by Greek troops and irregular bands, and of the political goal pursued by the Greek High Command. This goal is a very simple one: to make sure that at the moment of a possible plebiscite in the contested regions, the population there should appear to be purely Greek. Hearing such stories from the mouths of the victims and seeing

hundreds of thousands of people displaced from their own land, the Turkish peasant of Central Anatolia firmly bears the brunt of war and is willing to continue to fight stubbornly until the enemy has been expelled from Anatolia.

.....
(p. 329)

At one of the wider points in this ravine, we come across the ruins of a large village with remains of good houses, not of the Turkish type. It is the same story again. From a large and apparently rich village with garden cultures and vineyards, there remain only ruins and traces of trampled and burned crops . . .

We passed another big village on the left side of the road. As we were coming up to it, at a distance of approximately two versts, we suddenly heard a shot and immediately afterwards a group of men on horseback galloped away in the opposite direction from ours. My gendarme escort got all excited, grabbed their rifles and galloped up to me (I was riding ahead of our party). I asked the gendarme officer what it was all about. He said that he did not know himself: it could be bandits, but it could also be a gendarme detachment. It should be mentioned that this area is still dangerous from the point of view of banditism, and the old major had insisted that I take with me a reinforced escort headed by an officer. The bands here are not Greek, but are mainly made up of deserters, Turks and Circassians — especially the latter . . .

This valley is almost entirely populated by Circassians who came here from Russia. In the villages there are still many old men who speak excellent Russian. They met us with amazing hospitality. They absolutely refused to accept payment for anything. They showed a lively interest for events in Russia, and particularly in the Kuban and the Terek oblast. Most of them have heard about the Revolution, but, because of the input of White Caucasian refugees, they have a completely wrong understanding of it. Still, in spite of the provocative propaganda, they feel instinctively what the Revolution is about and they have a very positive attitude toward Soviet Russia. There are, of course, amusing anachronisms as well. For example, an old man who left Russia during the reign of Alexander III asked: "And how is that Tsar? Is he still alive? He was a good Tsar, but he oppressed us Circassians in matters of religion and that is why we left."

The Circassians live well. Their homes are clean, almost all of them still have their Russian samovars which the women take good care of, and the old men remember Russia with love: "This is no life here," they exclaim. "You see nothing, you hear nothing, you live like an

animal." The Turkish government has a high opinion of the Circassians and treats them well. They are not sent to the front, like the Turks, but are used mainly as military police troops. They don't sympathize with the war against the Greeks.

"How about it?" they say. "When is Kemal going to make peace with the Greeks? We've had it with war. He made peace with you, and that is fine. He has to do the same with the Greeks — the people are discontented." We must stress that the Circassian population, as distinguished from the purely Turkish, is absolutely not interested in the outcome of the war and is only thirsting for its quick end. In Western Anatolia, occupied by the Greeks, the Circassians under Edhem-Bey, the well-known rebel leader, actually went over to the Greek side. They organized a Circassian Assembly in Smyrna which issued a decree for the formation of a Circassian Republic under Greek protection. This move, however, not only did not find support in the rest of Anatolia and among Circassian circles in Constantinople but was met with indignation.

The personality of Edhem-Bey is quite interesting. After the ceasefire with the Entente, he distinguished himself as one of the most energetic leaders of the resistance in the struggle against the occupation forces in Western Anatolia. The revolutionary spirit which, beginning in 1919, spread in the masses of working people in Anatolia, made possible the organization of revolutionary armed forces. Almost everywhere in Anatolia armed detachments sprang up, mainly on local initiative, and began to engage the occupation troops in partisan warfare. Edhem-Bey was one of the most popular and best known leaders of these detachments. All the detachments taken together made up an armed force which became known as "Kuva-i-Millie" ("National Forces"). Toward the end of 1920, while preserving their irregular character, the "National Forces" constituted themselves into an overall organization. In 1919 and 1920 the total brunt of the struggle against the Greeks lay on these "National Forces," headed by Edhem Bey who had his headquarters in Eski-Shehir. From the point of view of class make-up, the "National Forces" represented mainly the working element and the Anatolian peasantry. Their leadership, including Edhem-Bey, had to take into account the character of their forces, and for this reason, politically they held to a vague socialist-populist line.

To this effect, they published a newspaper in Eski-Shehir under the title "Yeni Dunya" ("New World"). At one point the "National Forces" organization was even in contact with the newly born Turkish Communist Party. "Yeni Dunya" printed [Communist] articles and even the proclamation of the Third International to the workers of Persia, Armenia, and Anatolia.

In the meantime, the government of the Grand National Assembly in Ankara was taking the most energetic measures in order to restore the centralized government machinery and the regular army. Toward the end of 1920, most provinces already had administrators appointed by Ankara. All kaimakams, mutesarifs, valis, etc., who, for some reason, did not measure up to the requirements of the government were immediately fired or arrested and replaced by others. At the same time, with the help of a great many officers who had arrived from Constantinople, regular military units were being formed in record time. For this work, the government relied on the majority of the members of the National Assembly, who represented bourgeois elements. In order to disorganize and undermine the Communist movement which was beginning to take root, the government organized a new Communist party, to which it gave full support. To this effect, it even issued a special decree, making this new party the only legal one. One of the members of the new party was Edhem-Bey.

The government's attitude toward the new party, however, later changed. After staging an unsuccessful uprising at the end of 1920, the party was liquidated. Edhem-Bey managed to disappear — but he soon reappeared on the other side of the front, and at this time he is in the ranks of the Greek army against the Turks.

This circumstance shows the true character of this man: he rode the wave of national revolutionary movement and became popular by exploiting the class instincts and requirements of the peasant masses but he was essentially a demagogue and an adventurer of the purest kind. At the same time, from the account of this incomplete and not very clear episode in the class struggle, it becomes clear that conditions for a social revolution in Turkey did not exist.

FROM MERZIFON TO KAVZA

(pp. 343-46)

. . . Kavza, these days, lives with the impressions of the self-liquidation of the Greek uprising in the adjoining region.

This uprising constitutes a great tragedy for the Greek population, not only of the Samsun region, but of the rest of Anatolia, all Greek settlements anywhere. The uprising which had been prepared by agitators and agents from Stambul and Athens under the incredible slogan of the creation of a Pontic Greek state, erupted in the beginning of 1921. The immediate occasion for the uprising was the mobilization which was proclaimed by the government for the war against Greece.

In the beginning, the majority of the Greeks who were being drafted appeared for induction quite freely. But soon, upon learning that they were being sent to fight against Greeks, and under the influence of corresponding agitation, started to desert en masse, trying to take with

them their arms. In the beginning, this movement did not have the character of an open uprising, but, eventually, under the double influence of the repressive measures taken by the government and the increasing agitation which received further impetus by the appearance of the Greek fleet at the shores of Anatolia and the military supplies it provided, it flared up more and more until it took the character of a mutual massacre.

It is interesting to note that before this uprising, according to the unanimous testimony all the Turks with whom we were able to speak, relations between the Christians and the surrounding Muslim population just could not have been more harmonious. At the time of the Imperialist War these same Greek peasants, abandoning a centuries-old tradition (in the Ottoman state, Christians were not subject to military service but paid a special tax instead), joined the army willingly when mobilized, and fought very well on all Turkish fronts.

And now, this rich, densely populated corner of Turkey has been subjected to untold destruction. Several hundred Greek and Turkish villages have been burnt to the ground. From the 200,000 strong Greek population of the sandjaks of Samsun, Sinop, and Amasia, there remain only a few bands, wandering around in the mountains. Almost all old people, women, and children have been resettled in the depths of the country, in the region of Diarbekir, Harput, and Konya. And as they were resettled without any of their material possessions in the most difficult time of the year, it can be said with certainty that, from this entire mass, hardly a few thousand people are still alive, seeking a miserable existence as beggars or slaves.

From our Kavza acquaintances we heard, in passing, of the atrocities committed by the punitive detachments even against urban Greek populations who had not participated in the uprising. The Laz chieftain, Osman-Aga, whom I have already mentioned, became particularly infamous in this respect. With his savage horde, he put this entire region to fire and sword. It is enough to point out that the Turks themselves, here, recall his feats with horror and do not want to have anything to do with him. I discovered this by chance.

While we were in Ankara, I had made the acquaintance of a Medjlis deputy from Lazistan by the name of Osman-Bey. He was a very nice man who had, it appears, lived in Batum and even studied in the Batum Gymnasium. For this reason he could speak Russian fairly well. Once I accepted an invitation to his home and this was mentioned in the newspapers. And now, upon my return trip to the coast, I was asked in several places whether it was true that I had been the guest of Osman-Bey. I confirmed the fact and the conversation stopped there, although I noticed that my answer did not produce a particularly pleasant

impression. And only in Kavza did I understand what it was all about. Having answered affirmatively to the same question, I was asked further, this time, whether I had any idea as to who this man was and what he had done . . . From the conversation it became clear that my Osman-Bey had nothing in common with Osman-Aga-the-Strangler, and my interlocutors were vastly relieved. And it was here that I learned that in the very town of Kavza Osman-Aga's bandits had committed horrors: they burnt, raped, and killed without exception all Greeks and Armenians, killed children by smashing them against the pavement, etc., etc. In one word, all which have been used from antiquity for the resolution of conflicts between Christians and Muslims were used.

In the interests of justice, I must repeat once more that both sides do the same: the Greeks in Western Anatolia exterminate the Muslims.

Only here, under these conditions of wild, animal-like ethnic conflict, where whole peoples are set upon each other without regard to sex or age, without any mercy, can one feel to its full extent all the rottenness and hypocrisy of the "civilized" bourgeois West.

For it was the Entente which nurtured the megalomaniac dreams of a Greater Armenia "from sea to sea" in the heads of a handful of Armenian nationalists. It is this which led to the wiping off the face of the earth of hundreds of thousands of Armenian peasants by their Turkish and Kurdish neighbors. They were sacrificed to this groundless and stupid fantasy. And it is in the interests of this very same Entente that for the third year in a row now, blood runs in rivers in the fields and mountains of Anatolia. And the worst of all is that those who are paying have no understanding of what is happening to them and why.

It happened that on the day of our arrival in Kavza there also appeared there a group of emissaries from one of the rebel detachments. The emissaries were asking why the Turkish government, which they had always served honestly, is now hunting them down like beasts. And we must truthfully admit that the vast majority of these rebels, who come from the most distant and God-forsaken villages, really does not know what is happening. This can only be known to those who sit in the towns and who, in the last analysis, pay less, more often sacrificing their purse rather than their life. As for the peasants, they were pushed into this, they went, and, as a result, they must disappear from the face of the earth.

The majority of the rebels, having held out almost a year in mountain fastnesses, amidst incredible privations, have begun to surrender. This phenomenon has been reenforced by Kemal Pasha's order, strictly forbidding the killing of those who turn themselves in. But some of them continue to hold out stubbornly, stating that they will go on fighting until the end of the war with the Greeks. According to the

Turks, among them there are Greek officers who have come from Constantinople.

Around 12 o'clock on the 12th we left for Kavak. Approximately ten versts from the city we met a group of 60-70 men. They were Greeks who had just surrendered their weapons. They were exhausted to the utmost; their faces were lifeless, thin, some looked like walking skeletons. Instead of clothes they were hung with rags and all of them were barefoot. In the center of the group there was a tall thin priest in his "kalimafki" [characteristic headgear of Orthodox priests — ed.]. The weather was not particularly warm. A cold wind was blowing, and the whole group, along with their soldier escorts, are jogging towards Kavza. Some of them, seeing us, start to cry loudly, more exactly to howl, as the sounds that were torn from their breasts were more like the howling of a hunted and tormented beast. I held up the group for a moment. The soldier escorting me ordered their escort not to dare mistreat them, and the sad procession continued on its way . . .

.....
ON THE WAY BACK FROM ANKARA TO SAMSUN: THE LAST DAY —
January 13, 1922 (pp. 347-48)

We left Kavak on January 13, at 7 in the morning. It was not raining but the sky was covered with clouds and a cold, penetrating wind was blowing. Our baggage train had left a little earlier and must have been about four versts ahead of us. A major, with whom we had become acquainted the first time we passed through Kavak, rode with us. He was complaining about the difficulties of serving in this area in which banditism was rife.

Just after Kavak the road begins to climb toward the high pass of Hadjiler. Up there, in spite of the sun which was beginning to appear, it was devilishly cold because of the cutting wind, penetrating to the bone. At the height of the pass we met some kind of convoy. I looked — female figures, draped in black, were sitting or lying in open carts. Among them I could see children. All of them were badly dressed and trembling from the cold. As I was watching, a soldier picked up a small girl dressed in rags and placed her on one of the carts. She was blue from the cold and trembling all over and she hid her head under a sieve that was lying in the cart. Flabbergasted, I asked the major for an explanation and he answered: "These are the families of bandits. They are resettling in Amasia."

Downcast, in heavy silence, we pursued our way to Samsun. There were signs of destruction everywhere. Patrols on every hill. Sentries on the alert. There was a feeling that somewhere near the enemy was hiding. I shall remember this road for the rest of my life. Along its entire 30-verst length we constantly ran into bodies. I personally counted 58,

many of them raped and mutilated. In one place we ran into the body of a beautiful girl, with her head severed and placed in her arms. In another, the body of a graceful, blond little girl, no more than seven or eight years old, bare-legged, in just a shift. The girl obviously had been crying, pressing her face against the earth, and she remained in that position, pinned to the earth by an asker's bayonet.

Finally, we arrived in Samsun. Two or three versts from the city we were met by an honor guard. The mutesarif and the commanding officer of the 10th division were there. So was a European-looking figure. As we rode up, it appeared that the latter was comrade Aralov, newly appointed plenipotentiary representative of the Russian Republic to Turkey.

Under the influence of what we had just seen, the meeting with the Samsun authorities turned out to be more than cold. Having joined the mutesarif at his invitation in his automobile, I first of all recounted to him everything that I had seen and asked him to immediately take measures in order to investigate the behavior of the convoy and to give appropriate instructions to authorities along the road to be followed by the people subject to resettlement. Ferik-Bey was extremely agitated and stated that he would immediately see to it that everything I said would be done. He further stated that 80 orphan children from this group had, on his orders, been left in Samsun in the care of the American Red Cross and that the rest of the children had been given to their mothers. The convoy included a doctor and, in general, he had done everything that could have been done under the circumstances. However, he continued, the attitude of the askers and the Turkish peasants was so hostile that cruelties occurred in spite of the measures taken by the authorities. Then he explained that the territory of the sandjak of Samsun had again been subjected to increased Greek bandit activity. The bandits had burned a number of Turkish villages and carried out raids along the Samsun-Ankara road, almost daily killing a number of askers and, in general, showing a very high profile. In view of these circumstances it had become necessary to take the extreme measure of resettling the entire Greek population deep in the hinterland.

All these explanations were, undoubtedly, true. I had seen the traces of destruction with my own eyes, as well as the extraordinary measures taken in order to guard the road. Checkpoints a verst apart and at every tenth verst a garrison consisting of one or two companies with trenches, barbed wire, etc. And everywhere the tense atmosphere of alert. In spite of all this, I could not overcome the feeling of moral repugnance to what I had seen, and the conversation with Ferik Bey was very cold and tense.

In our honor, the whole city was decorated with flags. The weather

had, toward the evening, become beautiful and we were met and escorted by a large crowd of people. But as I looked at this crowd in holiday spirits, I saw the figures of the martyrs left behind and I wanted only one thing — as fast as possible to return to our hungry and poor motherland, where there is also so much sorrow and so much suffering, but where you can feel the pulse of the people's soul striving for a better tomorrow, and where the national question has been solved in a totally different manner.