

Thomas Cosmades

The Story of the Life and Times of Thomas Cosmades

Introduction

For years friends and family have been requesting me to put down at least the highlights of my life, pleasant and unpleasant. Following serious thought I concluded that doing this could be of service to people dear to me. Also my account can benefit coming generations. Many recollections in my thoughts still cheer my heart and others sadden, or make me ashamed, even after many years. If I fail to put my remembrances on paper they will die with me; otherwise they will profit those interested. I am confident of their being useful, at least to some. Innumerable people have written and published their life stories. Some have attracted favorable impressions and others the contrary. The free pen entrusted for free expression shouldn't hesitate to record memories of some value.

We are living in an age of intimidation and trepidation. People everywhere are weighing their words, writings, criticisms, drawings, etc. Prevailing conditions often dictate people's manner of communication. Much talk is going around regarding democracy and free speech. Let's be candid about it, democratic freedom is curtailed at every turn with the erosion of unrestricted utterance. The free person shouldn't be intimidated by exorbitant reaction, or even violence. I firmly believe that thoughts, events and injustices should be spelled out. Therefore, I have recorded these pages. I did not conceal my failures, unwise decisions and crises in my own life. The same principle I have applied to conditions under which I lived and encountered from my childhood onwards.

History is a storehouse of events involving humans. Many of these happenings are suppressed. Or they are twisted in keeping with certain accepted positions. General knowledge would have been much richer if known facts had been objectively recorded, pursuing the benefit of the uninformed. In front of the Archives Department in Washington, D. C., the passer-by can notice this impressive motto: "Study the past; it is the prologue." Can anyone take issue with this? I have decided to abandon the dead-end road of reticence and to use my moral courage by putting in writing events and episodes which affected my life.

Numerous experiences are engraved in the heart of a minority individual born and reared in Turkey. Some of these happen to be unpleasant. Shall I allow these to die with me? Deciding to the contrary, I have written my life memories in English and in Turkish. There are certainly subjective accounts in this writing. On the other hand, those which I am writing objectively, as much as I can, offer concrete and tangible facts to every reader. These will not be to the liking of some. However, a faithful writer should not write with the aim of pleasing those he is addressing. There could be other opinions on these matters, but objective history is wide open to anyone to investigate and examine the issues.

Among the reminiscences, many events are referred to which I did not experience personally. However, these were checked and re-checked in order to present a historical record subject to no bias or partiality. I have carefully avoided being swayed by any exaggerated accounts. Remaining faithful to the truth has become life's principle for me. No one can contradict the fundamental dictum put forward in the New Testament: *"For we cannot do anything against the truth, but only for the truth"* (II Corinthians 13:8). Truth is eternal; lie and falsehood are invented. Truth is original; lie is fabricated. Truth is impartial; lie is prejudiced. It is far better to rejoice with truth than be soothed by inaccuracy. Truth may hurt and sadden one's heart; however it provides a breath of satisfaction to the one who loves it. Lie unsettles its inventor. It stirs anger and boisterousness when exposed. It always carries its manipulator to a defensive mien. *"Love does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right"* (I Corinthians 13:6). The unalterable guidance for the advocate of truth is found in Acts 4:20: *"For we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard."*

The 'Bekchi'

The institution of 'bekchi' (watchman – in this case, night watchman) was a traditional feature in old Constantinople. These neighborhood guards wore brown uniforms and visored caps. They were drafted from a given neighborhood, men who knew every nook and cranny of their area and the occupants of every house. After everybody retired for the night and a comfortable sleep, the duty of the bekchi began and theoretically continued until daybreak. The chief characteristic of the bekchi was his whistle which he would blow at every corner, infusing a sense of security to the dwellers of the neighborhood. He was responsible to protect them from burglars. No one seemed to appreciate that the shrill sound of the whistle was a signal to any would-be thief to make his getaway from the scene of the robbery. Our family endured one such indignity.

We often used to catch colds, all of our noses running. At a time when Kleenex was unknown, much less in Turkey, our mother Maria used to wash all the handkerchiefs by hand after having thoroughly boiled them in a large caldron. She did this one clear evening, and hung them on the lines in the garden behind our house where they could catch the clear fresh wind coming down off the Bosphorus. Our house was on the beautiful hills of Kuzgunjuk on the Asiatic side of the city. In spite of the alertness of the bekchi – or perhaps because he retreated to his house for a short respite – in the morning we were shocked to see all clotheslines stripped of their load. With running noses, how were we going to wipe our personal torrents? My mother immediately ran down to the market in Üsküdar and bought a couple yards of white cotton material, hurried back, sat down at her sewing machine and turned out many new handkerchiefs. She was a very industrious woman. Having had her education at the American mission school in Gedikpasha, she learned every aspect of homemaking from the able New England missionaries. From them she had also learned to make 'rock cake', a kind of hard cookie reminding one of the historic 'Plymouth Rock' (1620).

It was late April 1924 that our neighborhood bekchi noticed several kerosene lamps burning throughout the night in our two-storied wooden house. Being observant of every detail and particular, this aroused his curiosity. Finally, he rang our hand-turned doorbell, and inquired why so many lights were flickering throughout the

night. My Grandmother Despina, the matriarch of the family, answered him in jubilant excitement, "Bekchi, baba, bir oglumuz oldu!" (Father Bekchi," which is how people addressed him, "We got a son!") Suddenly the bekchi sank into grief, moaning his consolation: "Vah, vah!" (i.e., "Pity, pity!") My quick-witted Yiayia immediately grasped the bekchi's misunderstanding and corrected him: "Ölmedi, bekchi baba; oldu!" (i.e., "He did not die, bekchi baba, he came!") In a moment the bekchi's dismay turned into relief, and he burst out with "Oh, oh, oh!" Now Turkish is a very interesting language, with amazing peculiarities. It has similar sounding words whose meanings are worlds apart. The infinitive of 'to be' in 'olmak' and that of 'to die' are almost identical. Only in one case, the 'o' is spelled with a simple 'o' and in other case the 'o' has modifying double dots over the 'o', which in German is called 'Umlaut'. So the bekchi took the word 'oldu' as the word 'öldü'. But when grandma clarified the matter, his 'Vah, vah!' turned to 'Oh, oh!' The latter is a customary expression of excitement and happiness. So a big mistake was adequately clarified right after I became the firstborn child, and at that, a son, of the family.

As for the compensation of the bekchi, each house was responsible to pay him fifty kurush per month. At the end of the month, the bekchi went from house to house collecting his meager remuneration. This was willingly given by each family. Some appreciative people even offered him a glass of ayran, a yoghurt-water drink, with a little salt added. The bekchi was a loved individual.

A Permanent Feature of Istanbul

It would be a great injustice to the flavor of both old and new Istanbul not to mention one of the permanent features of the city, i.e., the dogs. These are nondescript mongrels that run the streets at will. Once in a while a special breed can be detected among them. They constitute an inescapable hallmark of the historic city. Although stray, they are rather tame, more-or-less domesticated. They make their home in the streets where they are born, exist, breed and die. Usually they hang around butcher shops, if there is one nearby, counting on the benevolence of the butcher to throw a tasty chunk of bone or a delicious lump of fat their way. These morsels are gulped down faster than the time it takes to throw them. Kind-hearted families sometimes treat the dogs to leftover food. They are also offered an abundance of stale bread from kitchen cupboards, since it is the custom of Turks to always keep more than the needed supply of bread. Occasionally the dogs are seen lingering around fish shops, alongside stray cats.

While frolicking among themselves, children gather around as spectators. Once in a while, a child singles one out for special affection, making it an out-of-the-house member of the family. In my youth whenever the dog population exploded, the municipal authorities carried them off to one of the barren islands in Marmara Sea to await a miserable death. Sometimes, though, dogs were poisoned right within the city and one could see their carcasses scattered around the streets and empty lots. Such practices have since been abandoned. When one of these dogs had a large litter of puppies, it was considered newsworthy enough to be reported in the tabloids. It seems that there is a lasting and romantic relationship between people and dogs in Istanbul. When these creatures are hungry, they look right into a person's eyes, begging charity. How grateful they are for the response of a generous person! Sometimes they recognize a suspicious stranger in the area and warn the

neighborhood by persistent barking. Although usually lethargic during the day, at night these dogs 'come alive' and great packs of them run howling through the streets.

Tulumbajilar

Old Istanbul was known as one of the renowned fire-prone cities. With practically one-hundred per cent wooden residences and shops generally adjacent to each other and open to varying winds, fire was a common occurrence. It often swept through hundreds of homes, shops, schools, etc., destroying them all in a single disaster. This menace necessitated the establishment of fire services back in the seventeenth century. At first, unorganized volunteers raced to the burning site with all sorts of commonly used equipment such as axes, hooks, and buckets. Teams of four men carried a type of platform on their shoulders with its large box holding all the paraphernalia. In the case of two men being shorter and two taller, the trick was to get a proper balance in carrying the load. However, this didn't always work, and sometimes the load shifted precariously as the men hobbled along, creating chuckles on the part of the onlookers. These men were all volunteers, but expected some sort of compensation for their service.

There were three tall fire towers in different areas of the city, one of them on the Asiatic side. Watchmen continuously checked for signs of fire from the top of these towers. In case two groups were racing to the same fire, sometimes a fight would break out between them, as they both wanted to be first in action. At other times the first arriving team would bargain with the occupier of the building about the payment for extinguishing the fire. After agreement about the compensation, everybody worked feverishly to quench the flames. Some even received a monetary share for items they rescued. Looting was not uncommon.

They would immediately place their pump into a well in order to draw up the needed water. It was not unusual for some fire-quenchers to actually start a fire in order to earn a few kurush. This was called 'tulumbaji syndrome'. The word 'tulumba' means 'pump' and the men who operated these water pumps were called 'tulumbajilar' – i.e., members of the fire brigade. The name became a derisive epithet which lent itself to describe rowdy, hell-raising, unruly people. These fellows were also given the name 'bozgunju' (creators of upheaval) because their work at times turned out to be more destructive than constructive. Extinguishing fires was an adventurous involvement which induced many to join the brigade, just as some people would attach themselves to mountain-climbing teams in our time. They also came to be known as 'semander' (salamanders) because of their so-called power to endure fire without harm, as mythology has it.

After many years this work was passed on to the 'Janissaries' (mentioned elsewhere) who were organized in ranks, being classified according to their particular participation in putting out fires. At a given area, there were water pumps which the brigade personnel would hurriedly grab and run to the task. But the service needed improvement. In 1720, a French mercenary pursuing his fortune appeared on the scene. He handily converted to Islam and took the name 'Davut Agha'. A section of the city was named after him. A man of initiative and skill, he soon invented a lighter and more efficient pump which expedited the work. Davut Agha had an amazing intuition on how to please the authorities. He became the brain of the art. He invented copper helmets for the men, each having its own number. The

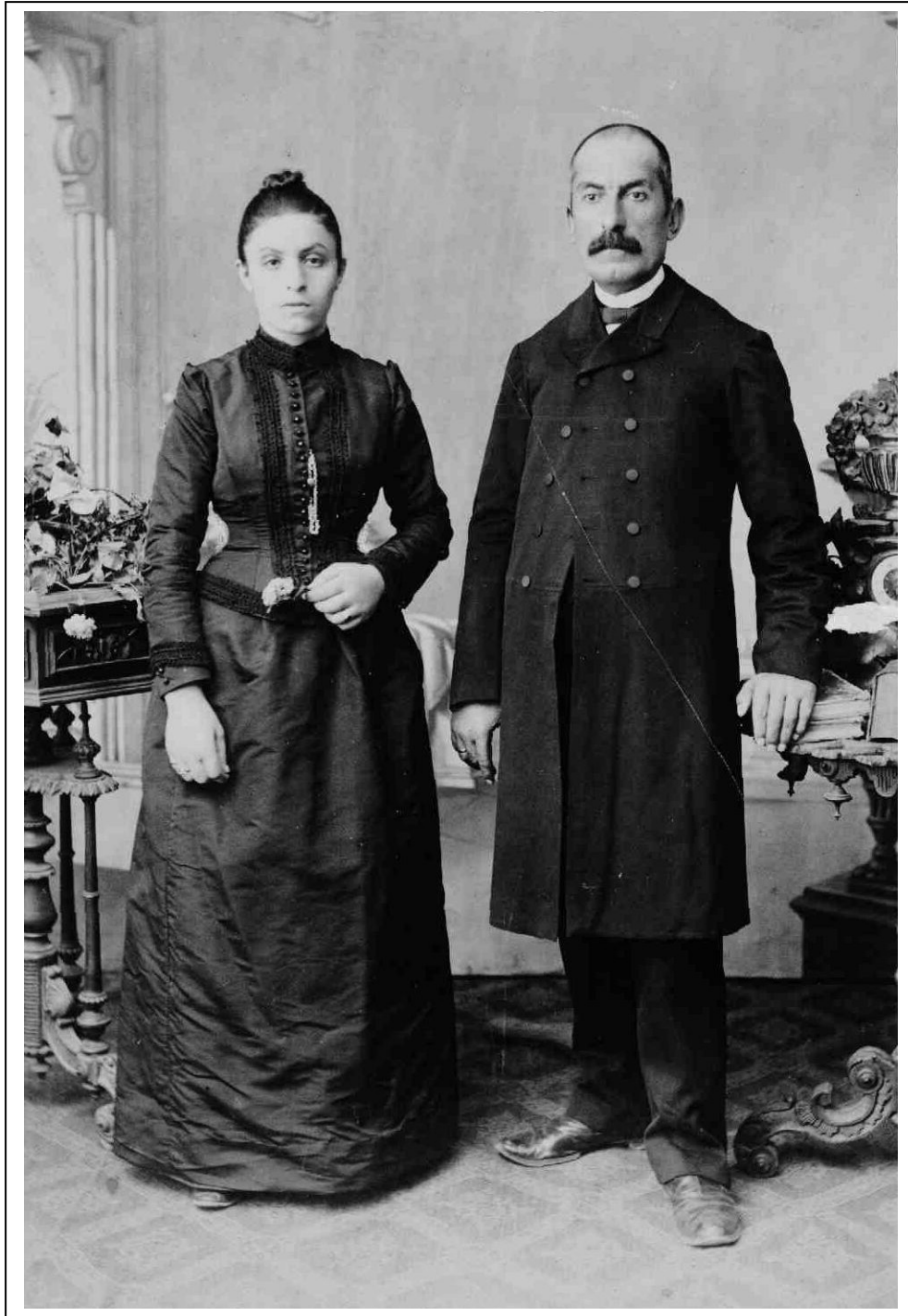
recruits in his service grew. In 1804 there were five hundred thirty-one firemen serving the city, but with the increase in population new expertise became necessary. In 1874 a Hungarian count, Othon Szechenyi, was called upon to revamp the service. He introduced a remarkable modernization. Completing his work within a year he returned to his homeland without embracing Islam. The system he established continued until 1923 when the municipality of the city took over the fire service. However long before this the Greeks who lived on the Pera side were already building their houses and apartments with bricks, diminishing the fire hazard. Today Istanbul like all other major cities is a cement and steel jungle.

My Mother's Side of the Family

Our beautiful wooden house on the hills of Kuzgunjuk had seven members – Yiayia (grandmother) and her unmarried younger brother Polycarp, mother and father, me and my two sisters, Irene and Dorothea who joined the family at two-year intervals after my birth. We all lived together until 1948 when Yiayia Despina went to meet her Lord. Her brother Polycarpus died in 1951, a few months after I had left for the United States. The house still stands, but now dwarfed by numerous surrounding cement apartment buildings. In the 1990's, Lila and I paid a visit to the family who owned the house at that time. They were 'Laz' from the Black Sea coast. The ancestry of the 'Laz' was all Greek, living on the majestic shores of the eastern Black Sea. Their progenitors were converted to Islam in the course of centuries of Ottoman rule.

Yiayia Despina was from Talas in Cappadocia near Kayseri (Caesarea), the same town from where my father's father Basil hailed. She was a young woman teaching in Turkish in a local Greek school. She was the right age for marriage. The family was evangelized by the missionaries of the American Board who had built a school and a hospital in Talas. Her upbringing was strictly in the New England Puritan tradition. This was more a religion of Puritanism and ethics than of salvation. The man who eventually became her husband, Toma Serafimides, after whom I was named, was about twenty-five years her senior. He was also from Cappadocia. His medium-sized town was called Fertek. It was a normal procedure for men in those times to move to the large cities in the west of Asia Minor to work and earn a livelihood. When the time came for marriage, they sought to marry a girl from the same general area where they had been brought up. Despina's younger brother Polycarpus had also come to Constantinople for work. Somewhere along the way he got acquainted with Toma 'efendi' (a term of respect for a person of some position). In the meantime Toma efendi was converted to the Protestant faith and became an elder at the Bible House Immanuel Church in Constantinople, which is functioning until now.

He mentioned to Uncle Polycarpus that he would like to marry a girl of his own persuasion. Uncle Polycarpus said to him, "I have a very nice sister in Talas, but she is quite a bit younger than you." It made no difference to Toma efendi, as it was prestigious to obtain a young bride. The two agreed, and my grandfather commissioned Uncle Polycarpus to travel to Talas and bring his sister Despina to marry Toma. Toma was a private banker ('sarraf' in Turkish – buyer and seller of gold and other precious metals and stones; money-lender, money-changer).



Grandfather Toma Serafimidis with Yiayia Despina

Uncle Polycarpus journeyed to Talas with great excitement to inform the family of the bright prospect of a well-situated bridegroom. When he opened the subject to the family, nobody brought any objection since the family was not well off. Their father Haralambos was a butcher in town. His business went well until he was converted to the Protestant faith. Upon hearing about this 'change of religion' the

local priest ordered the Orthodox populace, who were the majority in the town, to stop buying meat from him. He had himself, his wife and eight children to feed, so this hurt him seriously. At a time of weakness, he made a compromise, which he always regretted. He returned to the Orthodox Church. This was the situation of the family. Despina, being a convinced Protestant, was happy to move away from the quandary.

An Adventurous Trip to Constantinople

The trip back to Constantinople was quite taxing and also adventurous. Travel in Asia Minor in those days was mainly by horse-drawn coaches with improvised beds inside, operated by Tartars – a Turkic people from Russia. As there was no direct link to Constantinople, they had to travel from Talas to Samsun on the Black Sea coast. It was a long, arduous journey, with mountains to cross, and bandits lurking along the way. But Despina, having her brother at her side, felt quite safe. That is, until bandits appeared on the scene! Great excitement broke out among driver and passengers alike. The young girl among them, Despina, had to be hidden somehow, as she would certainly be the target of the bandits. The driver called out urgently, “Lie down flat!” and immediately he and a couple other men hastily and skillfully covered her. She was so perfectly concealed that the lump of disheveled rags gave the impression of being part of the passengers’ belongings. Once the crisis was over they proceeded uneventfully to Samsun. There they caught the first ship going to Constantinople. This was another journey of a few days.

Along the way, people were visiting and becoming acquainted with each other. There was a young Greek businessman returning to Constantinople who had gone to Cappadocia to find a bride, but without success. When he saw Despina, a beautiful young girl, immediately he desired to marry her. So he approached Uncle Polycarpus and asked if he would consent to give him his sister. Uncle Polycarpus being a very wise person did not say yes or no, but said to the man, “Let’s ask her!” So they asked Despina whether she would consider marrying this young Greek merchant. Yiayia Despina, always striving to live with Puritan principles, being true and upright in her way of life, replied, “I cannot do that; I have promised to marry a man who is waiting for me and I must stick to my commitment.” So the matter was settled.

They finally arrived at the Galata port of Constantinople. Uncle Polycarpus introduced his sister to Toma efendi. He was thrilled to have a beautiful young Christian bride, who had come all the way from Cappadocia to marry him. The marriage must have occurred in the very early 1890’s. The couple regularly attended the Bible House Immanuel Church where the preaching was in Turkish to a mixed congregation of Armenians and Greeks and some other folks. Toma efendi was an elder in this church. Around 1894, their first daughter, Anna, was born. Two years later, my mother Maria came into the world. In those days, they lived in Gedikpasha where an American mission school was functioning. Pappou (‘Grandfather’ in Greek) Toma efendi became ill with cancer and within a short time he left this world to meet his Lord. It was a great shock to young Despina whose married life had barely lasted five years. Having been a man of means, Toma left her a sizeable sum of money, some land and one or two houses. But for my poor grandmother it was burdensome to be left with two very young daughters and the

total responsibility of managing all financial affairs. My mother told me that she hardly remembered her father.

Polycarpus – a True Uncle

Uncle Polycarpus had decided to migrate to the young country of the United States and was ready to leave. He was all excited about it, but suddenly having been left with a widowed young sister and two little nieces, he reasoned with himself, “How can I leave this small family and take off for America?” He made the noble decision then and there to stay in Constantinople. Eventually he started a lumber business on the Asiatic side, right on the edge of the Bosphorus in a place called Balaban, in Üsküdar (Scoutari). He did fairly well in business. He never did marry, but remained a true uncle to the family to the very end of his life.

My mother and aunt attended the American mission school in Gedikpasha where the teaching was in English, Greek and Turkish. My aunt became a nurse and left for the U.S.A. in the early 1920's. Mother's destiny was to stay in Turkey with her mother and uncle. Grandma Despina was a very neat woman; she also loved fresh air. During summers, she rented a house on the hills of Kuzgunjuk and for three months she and her two daughters vacationed in this area, where it was cooler than in the city. Actually, she was not happy living in the middle of the Old City. So she and Uncle Polycarpus started searching for a piece of land in the very area where they had spent several summers. Kuzgunjuk was near Üsküdar on the Asiatic side, where they wanted to build a house. Being a lumber man, he could obtain reasonably-priced lumber. Of course, my grandmother had enough money.



*Our house in Kuzgunjuk when it was built
In the background, the Bosphorus is visible.*



*The house today – sandwiched
between newer buildings*

They located a nice piece of land in a district of Kuzgunjuk, known as 'İjadiye'. The foundation of their new home was laid in the spring of 1913. Within a few short months, a beautiful two-storied wooden house with a nice garden behind it was completed. And the small family moved from Gedikpasha to Kuzgunjuk. My mother was seventeen years old at the time. 'Dayi' (uncle) was very happy because this meant he wouldn't have to cross the Bosphorus every day to go to work. From the very outset, the house was a picnic place for church people from the European side. It was in the midst of an open field, overlooking the beautiful Bosphorus. On a hill just above, was a lovely little grove of Mediterranean pines where we played and used to go and collect pine nuts following a windy day or night. It was in this house that I was born in 1924. My sister Irene followed me in 1926 and Dorothea in 1928. I carry the most valuable memories of my life – some sweet, some bitter – from the years I lived in our old house until I said good-bye to the family in 1950 to go to the United States.

One of the most pleasant memories I have was the fascinating singing of the nightingales when they returned in the spring. My bedroom looked out at the woods. Just before dawn, a most beautiful chorus of singing nightingales used to burst forth, while I was still in bed. Recalling those sweet strains is one of the most delightful remembrances that I still carry from my childhood house. Where are the nightingales now?

Dayi was kind of patriarch in this unconventional extended family. He was 'Dayi' to the whole neighborhood – a widely respected honest businessman in Üsküdar. He had little formal education, but was endowed with a commanding personality, and brilliant in versatile knowledge. He was a man in touch with the times, thoroughly versed in Ottoman literature and history. The Ottoman language was made up primarily of Arabic and Persian words, with Greek not far behind. To me, he was a veritable dictionary and encyclopedia. He walked a half hour to his place of business at the seaside every morning and returned on foot at the end of the day. He was a person who elicited respect, a good-hearted man, but with an air of austerity.

My Father's Family

My father Michael was one of seven children. There were six boys and one girl born to Basil and Eleni. Before entering into further detail about my father it is apropos to refer to his parentage. My grandfather Basil hailed from Cappadocia, a historic territory in central Anatolia. When he was fourteen, as was customary for practically all males in Cappadocia, he left his home in Talas near Kayseri and moved to Constantinople. He journeyed in a horse caravan, operated by Tartar carriers. In Constantinople he had some friends from Talas, but no relatives.

There were many rich Greek families in this capital city that always employed young people for their homes. Through the mediation of a friend, Basil was placed in the home of a rich Greek family where he was engaged in all sorts of household chores. As one can surmise, his education was very limited. But he had a searching mind, and had no intention of settling for a life of servanthood. He stayed in that home for three or four years, while looking for better opportunities in the meantime. He heard that there were good job offers in Odessa, Russia. So he bade farewell to the Greek family to whom he had become attached, and sailed off to Odessa from

Constantinople. In a short time he found a job and started learning Russian. He expanded his interest in languages and learned Romanian as well, which was one of the commercial languages of the Black Sea region. He must have stayed in Odessa for about four years. When he had earned enough money he returned to Constantinople to marry.

He came back to the Greek family, his original employers, who by this time had employed a maid of Russian-Polish origin, hailing from Russia. Her name was Helena Sidnikova. It must be mentioned here that before WWI there was no country of Poland, as Poland had been divided between Germany and Russia. Her father Michael Sidnikov was from Tula in Russia. He was of the Orthodox faith. Her mother, Evthokia, was a Polish Catholic. As was customary in those times, Constantinople drew many people from the lands to the north. The whole Sidnikov family moved to Constantinople. Michael Sidnikov was a maker of special candles for the Orthodox Church. On each candle he painted an icon of a particular saint. In order for him to obtain employment from Greek churches, Evthokia had to be baptized into the Greek Orthodox faith. The family lived a very meager life. Both Evthokia and Michael died within a couple years of their coming to Constantinople.

Helena, their teen-age daughter, was left on her own. She had a brother named Costas who was acquainted with the same rich Greek family. He was able to place her in their house as a maid. The family having no daughter of their own adopted her. There couldn't have been a better arrangement. My grandfather, Basil, who had kept in touch with the family, was an eligible young man. It didn't take long for the rich family to suggest to Basil that he marry Helena, since both were alone in Constantinople. So Pappou and Yiayia, as we used to call them, were married around 1888-89 in the Greek Orthodox Church.

In the meantime, Pappou, having brought some money from Odessa and being a very ambitious entrepreneur, started a lumber business of his own at the well-known lumber market on the Golden Horn in Constantinople. As mentioned, they had seven children. The first child Simeon must have been born around 1890. He died in Plovdiv, Bulgaria in 1946 after the Communist regime took over. Being associated with the Standard Oil Company of USA, he was marked by the Communists and his later years became miserable. His wife Svetlana was a Bulgarian lady. They had no children. It is interesting to note why he wound up in Bulgaria. During the Balkan wars in the early twentieth century he was drafted into the Ottoman army and while serving in Bulgaria he was taken prisoner by the Bulgarians, which ended up in his settling in that country.

The second child was my father Michael, born in 1892. He was a quiet and rather shy person. Since we are at it, I will mention the rest of the children. The third child was a son, Cosmas, who migrated to the USA in 1914. He was a professional photographer, widely known in the Boston area. Actually he was the photographer of Wellesley College for commencements and other special occasions. He knew a Greek lady from Constantinople whom he invited to the States in order to marry her. She suffered increasingly serious mental problems, and never had children. Cosmas died in Watertown, Massachusetts in 1956 without any relative to bury him.

The fourth child was Anastasios, who like his older brother also had great interest in photography. In fact, the whole family had photography as a hobby. Anastasios also wanted to leave Turkey. It must have been at the conclusion of WWI that he bade farewell to his family and went to France, never to see them again. He married a young woman from Alsace-Lorraine of German background whose name was Marlyse. Anastasios died in Paris in 1956, the same year that Cosmas died in Boston. During our occasional visits to Paris we met Marlyse, a very personable, refined lady. They had two sons, Jim and Claude, both of whom died in their early seventies. I'm in touch with Claude's daughter Sophie Cosmades, who lives in Paris.

The fifth child was the only girl of the family, Evyenia, who after WWI moved to Greece, where she married a Pontian, Savvas Deliyannides, a teacher at the American Anatolia College in Thessaloniki. Aunt Eugenia had four children: Anna, Eleni, Yianni (John) and Cleo. Both she and her husband died in Athens. Two of their daughters, Anna and Cleo, also died in Athens.

The two younger boys, Manoli and Costas, also moved to Greece in the early twenties and settled in Piraeus. Interestingly, Manoli was born on Christmas Day in 1902. Vasil Agha named his son Immanuel. During the war years, Manoli moved to Melissia south of Corinth where he married a local uneducated woman by the name of Diamandi. They never had children, and both died in that little village. Uncle Manoli claimed to be an atheist and he thought he knew everything about everything. He prided himself on knowing many languages, which knowledge he used to impress the villagers. He ran a scruffy little grocery store, but had a beautiful piece of land with lemon and orange trees. His wife's nephew inherited this highly valuable property, thanks to Diamandi's shrewdness.

The youngest son, Costas, was involved in wholesale vegetable and fruit business in Piraeus, a very taxing work. His first wife died during WWII while undergoing an appendectomy. As the surgery was being carried on, air raid sirens were heard and the medical personnel retreated to the bomb shelter, leaving her on the operating table. They came back and found her dead. He and his second wife got divorced. The third wife, Loukia, is still alive; very old. Costas died in Athens. Uncle Costas, after he came to Greece, never attached himself to the Evangelical Church. He was totally secular. He had no children. Loukia, a very religious Orthodox woman, was dedicated to her church. In the latter years of Costas' life, she managed to move him to the Orthodox Church where he was baptized as an old man and became a faithful Orthodox adherent. Loukia was a bright, outgoing, lovely woman with whom we always had very pleasant visits whenever we were in Athens. She exuded kindness and was very hospitable. She took very good care of Costas, cooking delicious meals and keeping an immaculate house. She was always well-groomed and stylishly-dressed, in short, a classy woman. Lila kind of misses her when she thinks of her.

Back to the story of the grandfather: Pappou Vasili (Basil) and Yiayia Eleni married in the Greek Orthodox Church in Constantinople around 1888. Their first son Simeon was born in 1890 and baptized in the G.O. Church. Having an inquiring mind, Pappou Vasili started asking questions about religion. He obtained a Turkish Bible with Greek characters. Since there were people of various national backgrounds within the Ottoman Empire, the Greeks and Armenians of Anatolia whose first language had become Turkish, could read any book in Turkish, but

written in their own scripts, i.e., Greek or Armenian characters. Muslim Turks used the Arabic script. So we had the same language written in at least three different scripts.

An Impressive Script Innovated

At this point, an explanation is called for to tell about this strange development. The Ottoman conquest of Asia Minor starting in the thirteenth century brought the Turkish language to the land. Until then, Greeks, if educated, spoke proper Greek, but the uneducated in their local communities conversed in their own dialects which unfortunately are among the vanished linguistic treasures. When the Greek population had to comply with the imposition of using Turkish, their writing had to be conveyed in Turkish. But for their own benefit, they used Greek script, as they didn't know the Arabic alphabet, neither did they have any intention of learning it. This make-shift form of writing became common among all Turkish-speaking Greeks in Anatolia.

The practice continued until the early 1920's when the Greek population of Asia Minor came under the new arrangement to leave their homeland and be moved en masse to Greece. The first generation of these Greeks carried their Bibles and other pieces of literature with them which they continued using until they passed away. This script is commonly known as '*Karamanlithika*', which means 'Turkish spoken by the Greeks of Asia Minor.' By the next generation their children had fully adapted themselves to the Greek language with its own script. Books with *Karamanlithika* script are now collectors' items. The last I heard, a *Karamanlithiko* Bible was selling for five hundred dollars. A further note: after the conquest of Asia Minor, the Turks designated the Greeks as 'Rum' (pronounced, 'Room'). They did not allow the use of the name 'Ellen' (i.e. 'Greek' – related to historic Grecianism). They considered these people a different brand, giving them the title, '*Rum Milleti*' (which means 'nationally descendents of the Romans', by this time defunct). The Armenians were designated as '*Ermeni Milleti*', (which means 'descendents of the Armenian Gregorian religion').

The second child of the family was my father Michael. Somewhere between Simeon and Michael, Pappou started attending the Immanuel Bible House Church near Eminonu, where he was converted. He became known as 'Protestant Vasil Agha'. The word 'agha' in Turkish is an appellation of respect and importance. He was a person of commendable initiative, with immense respect for learning, while he had hardly completed elementary school. After his conversion, he strictly observed the moral-ethical principles which he had received at the Protestant church, where eventually he became an elder.

An incident known by many friends at the time is worth mentioning here. The well-known Galata Pontoon Bridge on the Golden Horn required a small charge for all pedestrians crossing it. One day when Vasil Agha came to the bridge, he forgot to pay the small fee. Apparently the person in charge did not notice him, as he was a small man, inconspicuous and pudgy, who could easily slip through the crowd. On his way back, he paid the fee for crossing the bridge twice, telling the man on duty, "This is for crossing now and the second for the previous time, because I forgot to pay it." The employee was flabbergasted: "In the many years that I've worked here, this is the first time that anyone has done this!" Pappou seized the opportunity to

give an indirect witness about his devotion to the principles of Jesus Christ. Another obligatory tax was an eccentric payment which they called, 'Yol parasi', i.e., road tax. Every male was obliged to pay a certain amount per month for walking on the roads. Those who did not pay the prescribed amount were supposed to work on some road-building project. I cannot recall anyone actually doing this. Eventually, this far-fetched tax obligation was scrapped.

Vasil Agha's family name was Jizitoglu, which name he never liked. He always referred to himself as 'Vasil Cosma', Cosma being his father's name. When Uncle Simeon started school in Fener on the Golden Horn, his teacher asked his name, which he gave as Simeon Jizitoglu. She said, "What kind of a funny name is that? Tell me your father's and grandfather's names. Simeon said, "Vasil and Cosma." She replied, "Fine; you will be known as Simeon Cosmades." Thanks to this ingenious lady we found our identity and individuality.

Vasil being an outdoors-man did not like living on the crowded shores of the Golden Horn. Having a lumber business with ample access to building material, he bought a piece of land, very cheap then, and built a lovely spacious house in Makrochori (in Greek, 'Distant Village'). Today the place is known as Bakirkoy (Copper Village), and is one of the most crowded sections of the city. The house he built was surrounded by a beautiful garden with an abundance of fruit trees. An attractive pergola was profusely covered by spreading grape vines, offering a place of shade in the summer, to say nothing of the bounteous fruit. The whole garden was a center of beauty. It was an enchanting place. Rabbits were kept in roomy enclosures. Mourning doves nested in the trees. Makrochori was then way out from the city, but easily accessible by commuter train.



Vasil Agha and Yiayia Helena with their seven children

Pappou apparently believed in the principle, “Multiply and fill the earth.” This is where he reared his seven children. Friday being the day off in the Ottoman Empire, church services were held on that day, but also on Sunday for those who could absent themselves from work since Sunday was a workday. Pappou and Yiayia, along with their children, traveled on the commuter train every Friday to attend the Bible House Church in the center of the city. The same commuter train is serving Istanbul today, and some of the carriages look as if they are relics from Pappou’s day! This ideal house with its garden was a very attractive spot for church people to come on Fridays after the morning service. Especially the young people would catch the train and go to Makrochori for an afternoon of recreation and relaxation. These outings were an every Friday occurrence.

During the preceding and subsequent years of WWI the older boys of the family left home, as already mentioned. However, the liveliness in the Makrochori home went on. Michael was very strongly attached to his father and was the only one who showed interest in his father’s business. So he started working in the lumber shop. Time arrived for his marriage. There was the family of Yiayia Despina, whose husband died in 1898. Yiayia Despina with her two daughters, Anna and Maria, had moved to Kuzgunjuk on the Asiatic side to the house she and Dayi had built. The church people thought that Michael and Maria would make a good match, and through the mediation of friends their marriage was arranged. It was in 1921 when my mother and father were married.



Mother and father at Heybeliada (Halki)



At mother's and father's engagement – on a hill above the Kuzgunjuk house



Father during military service, photographer at army headquarters

World War I Ends; Quiescent Wounds Fester

Constantinople at the time was under occupation with soldiers from various allied (entente) countries in control of the city. However, the future was very uncertain since Mustafa Kemal was fighting in the country against the Greek army. Greece had been given the Aegean region of Anatolia by the Allies in accordance with the Sevres Treaty following the defeat of the Ottomans. The Greek army through the very unwise decision of King Constantine marched inland. This adventure resulted in eventual catastrophe for Greece, also bringing the end of Grecianism in Asia Minor. It was a very tense time. Father was to come and live at Grandma Despina's house, not an easy arrangement, nevertheless quite customary at the time. As mentioned before, Yiayia Despina's younger brother, Polycarpus, a bachelor, who had a lumber business in Üsküdar was living in the same house, a jewel in the whole area. It is still standing as the only old building in the neighborhood.

The war of Anatolia between Turks and Greeks ended in September 1922 with the total collapse of the Greek army and its devastation when the Mustafa Kemal forces captured Smyrna (Izmir) and burned the whole Greek section of the city. This area eventually became the site of the Izmir International Fair. It was not only a war lost by the Greeks, but also meant the uprooting of nearly three million Greeks. Asia Minor had been their home for many centuries before the Turks ever appeared in this beautiful land during the thirteenth century. An exchange of population was arranged between the Turks and the defeated Greek government.

All Greeks from Asia Minor and Pontus were obliged to leave their ancestral home of countless generations and be removed to Greece, a country about which they knew very little. In the annals of Greek history, the defeat and the removal of the ethnic population is remembered as 'The Great Catastrophe'. Greeks can never forget this sad event in their history. However, we should consider the frightful Turkish nationalism of our day, which in actuality is chauvinism. Looking back, we can see that it was a very wise act on the part of the then prime minister, Eleutherios Venizelos (1864-1936) to rescue his own people from eventually becoming targets of oppression by radical Turkishism.

The sad episode that befell the whole Greek population of approximately 2,500,000, removed from their homeland was a sequel to the Lausanne Treaty (July 24, 1923) by which the Greeks abandoned Asia Minor for good. Against it, the Turks took their own people left in several parts of Greece from the days of Ottoman expansion. Among the Greeks who departed were those from Pontus around the Black Sea. They traveled to Constantinople in order to catch a boat for Greece. Some of these people were Protestants who bid farewell to their beautiful churches, along with other properties. Yiayia Despina and Uncle Polycarpus opened their home in Kuzguncuk to take in a number of these refugees, at least for a few days. Years later when I visited Katerini in Greece where many of the Pontians were established, several told me about the Christian comfort Yiayia and Uncle Polycarpus had offered them in their very last days in Turkey.

The Turkish remnant on the mainland of Greece and the island of Crete in turn were moved to Anatolia. However, their number was far less than that of the Greeks

who left everything behind and with unimaginable lamentation made their disconsolate exit to Greece. The demography of the whole area entirely changed within the span of a few short years. The only Greeks left in Turkey were those in Constantinople and on two islands off the Dardanelles, Imbros and Tenedos. At the writing of this piece (2008-09), due to political and economic pressure the one hundred per cent Greek population in these two islands has almost been eliminated.

The Armenian population had been done away with during the notorious massacres of 1915-16, and within a few brief years all Greeks were forced to depart from Asia Minor for good. The ringing of church bells was never to be heard again in this historic Christian land. Owls and bats inhabited abandoned churches and schools. Many churches were converted into mosques in the course of the ensuing years. Others were turned into prisons, warehouses, flour mills, cinemas and museums.

At this time, being a growing youngster, I was hearing these stories from conversations at home. Yiayia Despina's brother, Polycarpos, a keen student of politics and current events, used to explain to the rest of us the pitiful developments that had befallen the Armenian and Greek populations in Asia Minor. Kuzgunjuk was on the Asiatic side of the Bosphorus, where we lived. Makrohori, where Vasil Agha and Yiayia Eleni lived was on the European side. Pappou's and Yiayia's house lost its grandeur and glamour as many people were moving away. With the exit of so many Greeks, there were no more bustling church young people enjoying the beautiful house and spacious garden

During the occupation of Constantinople by the four entente forces (1918-1922) many Greeks thought this was *fait accompli*. They openly cooperated with the occupiers, but alas, following the collapse of the Greek army in Izmir and the re-taking of Constantinople by the newly emerging Turkish republic under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal, all collaborators hastily made their way to Greece.

The Lumber Market in Flames

A final disaster befell Vasil Agha in 1927. In one night the whole lumber market went up in flames. In Istanbul, all identical businesses were clustered in one area. The shops dealing with lumber were on the Golden Horn from where retailers would buy their various lumber needs and then ship them by motor boats to towns along the Marmara and all the way up the Bosphorus to sell them to customers. Other retailers would carry the purchased items by horse-drawn carriages or hamals (porters) with saddles on their backs. I barely remember when father in deep grief returned home one day and said, "We no more have a shop." This was the first crisis he had encountered in his business. Before the fire, of which the cause never became clear, business was going very well. But in one night – as the Turkish proverb puts it – "they sat on ashes." The market was known as 'Kerestejiler' (Wholesale Lumber Market). Naturally there was deep grief in Vasil Agha's heart, as he had started the enterprise from scratch. Father was accustomed to live in the shadow of Vasil Agha; he was not an entrepreneur in his own right.

My father may have done better if he had taken some line consistent with his innate abilities instead of pursuing his father's business. He was artistically inclined. First of all, photography was a great love of his. I remember he used to load his camera cartridges with glass films, always in the dark. Then he took valuable

pictures of the family, some of which we still have. Numerous old glass negatives – today collectors' items – were lost in the course of time. Only a few were saved, now in the possession of my nephew Michael Solomonides in Farmington, Connecticut. Father would retreat to some dark area in the house, where he carefully and patiently loaded the twelve cartridges with the glass films, preparing them for the next series of photos. When we lined up for pictures, father would place the cartridge in his camera, remove its cover and tell us not to move, so he could get a successful photo. The next day he would take the full cartridges to the photography shop in the city where beautiful black and white pictures were developed. The whole family would eagerly wait for father to come home so we could look at the new photos. This was invariably a joyful time for all of us. I often wondered why father did not become a professional photographer like his younger brother Cosmas in Boston, Massachusetts. It seems that he could not put his father's ready business out of his mind.

Father was also a skillful mandolin player. Especially on Sundays, he would take his mandolin, sit on a chair in the living room and play beautiful hymns and songs. He also enjoyed his hand-operated phonograph player, listening to widely-known Greek songs on 78 rpm records. Another enjoyable activity of his was woodworking. With fine tools, he produced beautiful objects out of ordinary plywood. He made intricate pieces by using a pattern or by following instructions from an original design and build replicas of well-known structures. One of the attractive items which he meticulously completed was a model of the renowned Eiffel Tower. This was his masterpiece. We all admired this achievement in particular. With such varied skills, he could have gone into some line of work which would have allowed him to develop his natural gifts. But at that time he didn't look for a new area of involvement.

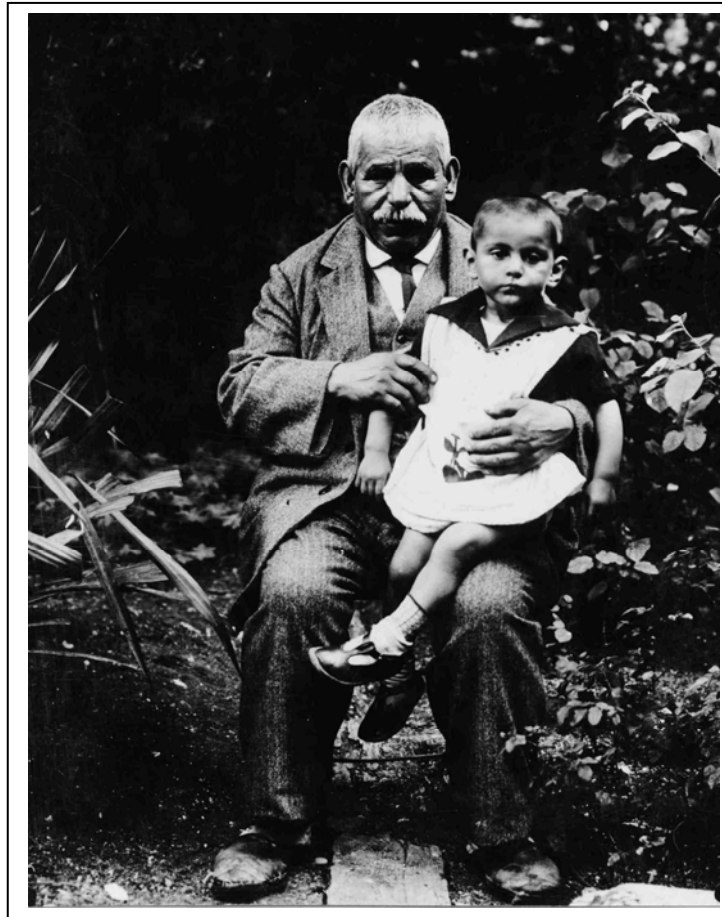
When the well-known business district known as 'Kerestjiler' was destroyed by fire leaving him without any occupation he was at a loss as to know what to do. At the time many Greeks were leaving Turkey for some other land, seeking better opportunities. So father, too, wanted to look into the possibility of a new opening for the future. Apparently, he had some savings. He left sufficient funds to mother, who had just given birth to our younger sister, Dorothea. When everything was arranged, he took off by train for Bulgaria to visit his older brother Simeon. He was hoping to find a good prospect of business in that country. Uncle Simeon was very helpful to him, but father could not make up his mind to engage in any new enterprise.

After spending several weeks in Bulgaria, he traveled by train down to Greece where he had a married sister and two younger brothers. His brothers were involved in wholesale fruit and vegetable business in Piraeus. The three of them talked about the possibility of starting a joint venture in this line of work. However, the risk of dealing with perishable fresh produce, and the demand of getting up very early each morning, to say nothing of the arduous work, did not appeal to him. After having unsuccessfully searched for some new avenue of enterprise, he finally decided to return to Istanbul and stick to the business he knew. His time away from the family was six months. As soon as he got back, he immediately found a small shop in the same section where the stores had been burned, and once again started dealing in lumber. The destiny of our family was sealed to remain in Turkey. Father died in

Istanbul at the age of seventy-seven in August, 1969. He is buried in the family tomb at the Protestant cemetery in Feriköy.

Farewell to Istanbul

The years were taking their toll on Pappou and Yiayia. How well I remember my early childhood when on Fridays mother and father would leave my little sisters with Yiayia Despina, and the three of us would go to visit my grandparents in their Makrohor (Bakirkoy) house. Because many of the church people had left Constantinople, very few visitors were coming now. Loneliness was apparent and my grandparents were so happy when we went to visit them.



Thomas on Grandpa Vasil Agha's lap

It was late fall. The elderly couple had harvested a rich supply of walnuts from a tree in their garden and spread them out in the attic to dry. While my parents and grandparents were visiting, I was trying to think of some way to entertain myself. I was an obstreperous youngster, thoroughly spoiled and very naughty. Being the sole boy in the family I was called by the pet name, 'Pasha' ('General' i.e., in the Turkish army). The firstborn boys are often spoiled by over-solicitousness and such exaggerated epithets. While the elders were discussing Pappou's and Yiayia's forthcoming move to Greece, I was twirling around the big house, idly passing my time.

Then my steps led me up to the attic. "What a scene!" I thought. A carpet of walnuts covered the floor. I searched eagerly for some gadget to satisfy my appetite for the nuts laid out in abundance before me. Conveniently, I discovered a hammer in a corner. And at another end of the attic, I found an old iron. These were just what I needed. Like a hungry chicken that suddenly finds itself in a bushel of wheat, I made a beeline to the walnuts, breaking and devouring one after the other. I cannot remember how many dozens or scores of nuts I had downed when my tummy started sending alarm signals. An unbearable heaviness settled on my stomach. I felt like I had to throw up, but I couldn't. Leaving the treasure behind, I rushed downstairs to my parents. "What happened to you?" asked my dear mother in consternation. I could hardly answer, but blurted out, "I'm sick; I ate too many nuts." Since it was Friday, the day off, there were no doctors around. Vasil Agha, with his practical mind had a ready answer: "Let's take him to the open pharmacy down the street." We all rushed over to the nearby pharmacy. The owner, a Turk, was a kind and understanding person. "Don't worry," he said, and gave me some medicine. "Drink it!" he commanded. It tasted awful, but I drank it. "Come now," he continued, and took me out to the side of the road. What a relief! I vomited continually for a few minutes and finally my stomach was emptied. My parents paid the pharmacist and we walked home, I hanging my head in shame and not saying a word. I felt amply chastised for my misbehavior.

Apparently it was decided on that day that Pappou and Yiayia would be selling that choice house where we all had unforgettable memories, and sail off for Piraeus, Greece, to join their two younger boys. So ended the few brief years with my beloved grandparents, whom I never saw again. Their departure was a heavy blow, especially on father, who was used to work in the shadow of his entrepreneurial father. We would never again visit Makrochori. The memory of their delightful place in Makrochori is etched indelibly in my mind. No sign of it is left. The whole area is now congested with nondescript cement apartment buildings.

Talking about my unruly conduct, another unpleasant experience comes to mind – this time at our Kuzgunjuk home. Having a spacious field all around us, we kept chickens in a coop in our garden. Every morning the chickens were let out to the empty fields around. There was no end to the joy of observing them pulling out worms from the ground, satisfying their empty stomachs. We always had fresh eggs in our kitchen at a time when there were no refrigerators. Yiayia Despina would put eggs under the hens when they were ready to brood. I couldn't wait to count the twenty-one days until the chicks would hatch... I always wrote the date of the brooding hens in a little notebook, eagerly waiting for the baby chicks to break out of their shells. I would very frequently lift up the hen to see how many baby chicks were there. One day I noticed an eggshell that was cracked with a little chick trying to come out. All of a sudden, I was filled with excitement. I took the egg in my hand and said, "Let me help you to come out, little chick." Breaking the shell, I took the chicken out. But in no more than half a minute, the little head of the poor chick drooped to one side and the chick died. With the poor dead chick in my hand, I ran to Yiayia in tears. She immediately pointed my great error out to me. My childish attempt to assist nature in its task to give birth to the chick had ended in disaster. For many days I couldn't forget what I had done. My ignorance had killed that beautiful little chick. This sad experience was later to become an illustration in my preaching that we can never force a person into hasty salvation. If the Holy Spirit

does not work in a sinner's heart to bring him into the saving arms of Jesus Christ, forced human effort can only lead to still-born babes.

Back to Pappou and Yiayia, the day they sailed from the port of Galata was wrenching, especially for my father. He realized that from then on he had to stand on his own feet. The two youngest sons, Manoli and Costas, met my grandparents at the port city of Piraeus and shortly thereafter bought them a modest house with the money Pappou had brought from the sale of the Makrochori place. From what I heard, there was no comparison between the former and the latter houses. Their new home was situated in a nondescript section of Piraeus called Tambouria.

It was a blessing that they soon found the Evangelical Church in Piraeus where they became active members. Pappou was made elder in this church where the pastor was the venerable Stavros Deliyannides, a Pontian. Some of the many Greeks who had left Asia Minor and settled in Piraeus needed a leader. Pastor Deliyannides, a graduate of Nyack Bible College in New York, joined the churchless congregation and became their pastor. Eventually they bought a piece of land in Piraeus. Brother Deliyannides spearheaded the building of a beautiful edifice, which is the Evangelical Church of Piraeus to this day – albeit thoroughly dwarfed by the high-rises around it – and no parking space! Talking about this ingenious pastor – with his own initiative he purchased a beautiful piece of property at Kalamos near Athens where he eventually built the evangelical campsite. It is still a bustling center of recreation with a wide scale of worthy Christian activities through many months of the year. Pappou Vasil was very happy in his new church fellowship. However, the nostalgia for Makrochori and for Constantinople followed him to the end of his days.



Vasil Agha and Grandmother Helena in courtyard of home in Piraeus

An Ancient City

Constantinople did not rate as an important city in New Testament times. If it had, undoubtedly the Apostle Paul would have visited it. The reference in Acts 16:7 offers a clue of this possibility, which did not materialize due to the Apostle's and his company's guidance to Macedonia. Its first name was Byzantium, derivation of

Byzas, a colony-procurer from Megara in Peloponnesus. In 658 B.C. he sailed with his band of colonizers to this fishing village, in view of establishing a commercial port and trading city. The strategic waterway became a stopping place for world conquerors: Darius I (reigned 522-486 B.C.), who jumped over to Europe from there; later Philip II (reigned 359-336 B.C.) reached this city from the west. His dream to advance into Asia did not materialize. This glory was reserved for Alexander III (reigned 336-323 B.C.), his son. From geographical, historical, and natural points it was destined to become a key metropolis of the world. In the neighborhood of our house, we had a Greek gardener by the name of Nicolas. He was not educated at all, but was a very bright person. I loved to talk with him because he had wide knowledge on many topics. One day, our talk revolved around our city. I can never forget his remarking, "This place is the aphalos (navel) of the world." His observation was very accurate. Between its inception and possession by Constantine the Great (reigned 306-337 A.D.) the city gained universal prominence.

When the Romans took possession of the place, they named it 'Augusta Antonina'. Constantine, then ruling in Rome, did not like that city at all. He started searching for a modern capital and moved to the city in the east. The place which was to take his name was built on seven hills, just as Rome was. However, he needed a military victory to make his mark in history. This opportunity came when he defeated Emperor Lysinius on the Asiatic side in 324 and took control of the city. He immediately named it after himself. He built the new city according to his own taste. Work started in 328 and was completed in 330. Historians remark about the glowing grandeur of the new capital. The place was soon called 'the queen of cities'. Ultimately it was going to become known as 'New Rome'.

Later the renowned Emperor Justinian (reigned from 483 to 565) became known as one of the greatest lawmakers in the annals of history. Justinian also built the world-renowned St. Sophia, which is a cause of contention to the present day. At the completion of this majestic cathedral, he jubilated, "Solomon, I have surpassed you!" Actually, he had brought some pillars from the temple in Jerusalem which he used in the construction of the cathedral. At the fall of Constantinople to the Turks in 1453, the conqueror, Mehmet II, declared this Christian cathedral a mosque, initiating its new ownership by praying according to the Islamic way. When Ataturk took over in 1922, he did not allow it to continue as a mosque; instead he converted it to a museum and uncovered all the plastered-over mosaics. The contention of the religionist-nationalist Turks has ever been to convert it again into a mosque, even though they have the Blue Mosque just across the park from St. Sophia.

Lately in the attempt to open a tunnel under the Bosphorus, at the European shore the diggers came upon an ancient tomb in which they discovered the bones of two adults and two children, with burial offerings. Archeologists are dating this find to 4,000 B.C. (Bronze Age). There can be no argument that this city situated right at the outer edge of Asia had a longer history than supposed until this time.



My sisters and I with Dayi Polycarpus outside the front door of our house

The Case of the Vanished Oak

Vasil Agha was the brain of his lumber business which he would pass on to his son. My father was a rather naïve and guileless retailer. He would buy merchandise from wholesalers and in turn sell it to his customers, who always trusted him. He was known as a handler of second-quality material. In the same market area a man from the Black Sea region by the name of Metozade Hasan was doing business with the various traders. The title 'zade' accorded honor to a person, empowering him to exude confidence in his relationships in the society and business world. My father happened to be one of those persons Metozade Hasan conveniently impressed. He trusted him implicitly. Hasan bey approached my father and told him there was a promising deal of oak lumber – a hardwood much sought after, but never dealt with by my father. Hasan bey knew the owner of the oak tree forest well. He could make arrangements for a bulk shipment which would bring a profit of one hundred per cent. There was only one condition for the preferred buyer, and that was prepayment of the purchase. Since Mihal efendi had a good name and a reputable shop, he would be eligible for a loan from the bank. All he had to do was sign the contract for payment, and the way was clear. The cunning faker talked my father into a deal which was never going to be realized. My father went with him to the Commerce Bank and signed for the few thousand lira prepayment. Hasan bey gleefully put the check into his pocket and went to his oak-tree friend to make the payment.

Soon the glossing over began. The company was not keeping its promise, but Hasan was earnestly pursuing the matter. Hope was not lost... It didn't take long for my

father to realize he had been duped. That was in the early thirties. Father found himself in a terrible quandary. The bank would obtain a warrant of sequestration from the court; father's small business would be closed and whatever stock he had would be sold. Furthermore, the furniture of the house would be sequestered. Hurriedly, my mother made arrangements with several good-hearted neighbors to move a few pieces of our valuable furniture to their homes to be kept until the storm had passed. God reached down to help us in our predicament. The bank came with a favorable proposal. If Mihal efendi would pay a certain amount each month, they would leave him alone. Not a bad arrangement, but it meant that a sizeable chunk of father's meager earnings would be taken away month after month.

Without mother's ingenuity we wouldn't have been able to weather the storm. Kyria Maria who was brought up as an orphan girl was a very able and frugal woman. She was the matriarch of the family with the adroitness and courage to wrestle with these sad developments. Happily, the house was my grandmother's, which meant that nobody could take it over. Uncle Polycarpus had an established lumber business in Üsküdar. Thank God, we made it with their moral and material support, never lacking food on our table. By the mercy of our heavenly Father, the family bravely encountered the awful storm. This was the first great crisis we faced as a family. Through this tormenting experience my little sisters and I learned the art of being thrifty. The long-term benefit of Hasan bey's unprincipled act was not lost on any of us. Wonder of wonders, eighty years later, very coincidentally I became acquainted with Hasan bey's daughter over the phone. On hearing the story, she was shocked and very sorry. She was too young at the time to know anything about this episode. In our friendly conversation, I tried to explain to her about man's fallenness and the need of personal salvation.



Mother with Irini, Dorothea and Thomas



Yiayia Despina and three grandchildren

Father's faith was inherited from Vasil Agha. Likewise, Mother's religion was inherited. While very exact in her beliefs, she was not a woman of true faith. The storm gradually died out. At this time, a well-known preacher from Toronto visited Istanbul. He preached once or twice at the Bible House Immanuel Church. His interpreter was Miss Meryem Hagopian, a teacher at the American Academy and a good friend of the family. Years later, she too was swindled – by a group of Turkish men who had supposedly accepted the Christian faith and got money from her to apply for the start of a church. While such happenings may sound strange to a reader unfamiliar with the mentality of the local people, they were not uncommon to those acquainted with the situation. One recalls the words of the prophet Jeremiah, *“Like the partridge that gathers a brood which she did not hatch, so is he who gets riches but not by right; in the midst of his days they will leave him, and at his end he will be a fool”* (17:11).

Back to our subject: The church was full to capacity. Oswald J. Smith, a born evangelist-preacher, poured his heart out. I recall every detail of those meetings. It was in one of those two meetings that father, as he always later mentioned, had his genuine encounter with the Savior. This is what he needed after the awful fraud he had experienced. I as a young boy remained an onlooker. I still regret that I missed a marvelous opportunity to receive Christ's salvation at that time. I would have to wait for another 'Smith' in 1949 to believe in Christ as my Savior and Lord. Also, in those younger days of my life, Vahram Tatikian was going from house to house conducting meetings and introducing people to Jesus Christ. Many, especially among the Armenian folks, were turning to the Savior. That was another lost opportunity for me.

The Armenian Genocide

A generally accepted maxim of logic is to delve into the profundity of any subject, analyze, examine and discuss it with clarity or abjure it compellingly. In the realm of learning and knowing there cannot be a single area closed to examination. This rule applies to science, philosophy, politics, economics and certainly to religion or secular thinking. Societies or individuals who shove past events under the rug because of some taboo, block the road to historical enlightenment. By employing methods of intimidation they throw themselves into the abyss of denial. History cannot be rewritten to accord with our advantage or liking. The way to breathe the clear air of the atmosphere of free thought is possible only by being liberated from captive notions. The Armenian massacre in the early part of the twentieth century is among these thorny issues. Whenever the topic appears on the agenda those disturbed by the event immediately raise their opposition by the demurral, “This has not occurred!” The taboo which could not even be referred to at one time has been unveiled in our age of candidness. Past and present events are continuously flashed before our eyes. Now is the right time to lance this boil of the disheartening past. The end result of exposing this tormenting ferocity will likely bring nothing less than catharsis and therapy of a past policy which was planned and executed by an entirely different governmental system. This fact is coming to light after ninety years. For whole decades, all Armenians who lost one or more members of their ancestors in the Ottoman bloodbath on Anatolian soil are being vindicated by the present-day exposure.

I grew up with Turks and Armenians. It was a time when the sufferings and agonies of the Armenian people could not be discussed. Amazingly, it is at the top of the list of important issues in our day. Articles and books are being written about it; people who had scant knowledge of the genocide are being informed more fully. And naturally, the Turkish government is being confronted daily with this ever-persistent sore. The chief supporter of the Turkish denial of their notorious execution of genocide has been the U. S. government; the Pentagon, the State Department and shockingly, the Jewish lobby in Washington, D.C. There is a cynical theory which goes like this: The Jews wish to confine the occurrence of a holocaust to their own nation, impressing on the world their national agony under the Third Reich. They are unwilling to acknowledge that another ethnic community was shamefully subjected to a catastrophic genocide a few decades before. Renowned Turkish writers, novelists, academicians and defenders of human rights are now courageously bringing this suppressed issue into light. They walk a tight rope. Actually, there is a slightly modified article in the Penal Code of the Turkish Constitution known as '301'. It states that any individual who denigrates 'Turkish national dignity' is subject to prosecution. I remember that many minority persons were falsely smeared for insulting 'Turkishness', and ended up in jail. Even in our time, to talk about the Armenian massacre is considered an insult to Turkish national dignity. Nevertheless, a number of writers have already risked their necks by approaching this odious issue in Turkish history. Among these was Hrant Dink, publisher of the Armenian weekly 'Agosh'. He was gunned down by a teen-ager in front of his publishing house. The ultra-nationalistic young man gained the favor of certain policemen who after this crime proudly posed with him in front of a Turkish flag. This photo was published in several newspapers.

Under the prevailing conditions during my childhood, I couldn't imagine that taboos of that time would some day be dashed to pieces. The Ottoman emperor, Abdul Hamid II (1842-1915), given the epithet the 'Red Sultan', ruled despotically over the empire for thirty years until he was dethroned in 1908. He initiated the first Armenian massacre in the mid 1890's. This was thought to be a horrible past episode when the party of the Young Turks, 'Ittihad and Terakki', took over the reins of the government. The new party of I & T was reassuring, especially to the Armenians and other non-Muslim segments of the country, that their government would be different. The name meant, 'The Party of Union and Progress'. It started ruling the empire with brilliant promises. Had these been kept and carried out, modern Turkey wouldn't have had to encounter the quandaries they are coping with today. Abhorrent practices of the nineteenth century could have become constructive lessons. But alas, the devastating storm still lay ahead.

The first genocide of the twentieth century shrewdly plotted over ninety years ago, has come into view, been studied and analyzed in every possible detail. The Ottomans' allies during WWI, Germany and Austro-Hungarians, are still smarting from their indifference to the crime committed by their ally, the Ottomans. Their parliaments recognize it, suggesting to the Turkish parliament to deal equitably with this bleeding wound. The German media always refer to the Armenian massacre with profound regret. Information on the subject is delved into from archives. In dealing with the atrocities of the Third Reich, the Germans are continuously confronted with their own recent past with frequent documentaries and historical reports. The catharsis achieved by the Germans who face their unpalatable past can also be the Turks' if they wish. One of the issues to be considered for Turkey's

entry into the European community is their recognition of this massacre. We have just passed the century of genocides. Countries like France are stressing the urgency to lance the boil. Who can tell how this outrageous act will be remembered at its centenary? The younger generation may even be reminded of the genocide by way of a film. Old documents are open to everyone; internet websites display information for all to see.

As a person who takes every word spoken by Jesus Christ seriously, I cannot ignore what he said: *"Nothing is covered up that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known"* (Luke 12:2). In the Old Testament, Moses pronounced the same truth: *"...be sure your sin will find you out"* (Numbers 32:23b). Everyone's offense will find him out; in time, in conscience, in eternity. The boomerang of the Australian aborigines teaches everyone this basic principle. All revenge, heartlessness, injustice and bloodshed will receive their due recompense. This is God's unalterable principle and cannot be violated by anyone.

Haji Hatoun

In our neighborhood and the surroundings there were grieved Armenian women who were known as 'remnants of the sword'. Their husbands had been murdered, had perished on the road of deportation or died from torture. The men especially targeted were intellectuals, writers, doctors, teachers, musicians or owners of prosperous farms, along with ordinary working folks. All of them disappeared at the hands of cruel, pitiless men who had a blank check to destroy them. My mother had a washer-woman who came to us once a week. One would think that every part of her body was saying, "See what sufferings I have endured!" Her toothless gums were a witness to the cruel ordeal she had undergone. She had come to Istanbul all the way from Van, the Armenian heartland in the East. Out of the whole family only her daughter was saved from the merciless expulsion and eradication. The daughter grew up, but the horror of her childhood was imprinted on her entire being. Every night in bed she would fearfully cling to her mother and could only sleep in her arms. She was in no condition to do any work.

The woman was known as 'Haji Hatoun' (pilgrim lady). A long time before she had gone to Jerusalem to bow before Christ's empty tomb and in this way had become a pilgrim. On her right hand was a tattooed cross, a sign of her status. She would wash our clothes from morning till evening. At noon she would eat with us. Her father, husband and brothers had owned a big farm with many cows. In her broken Turkish she would tell of the beauty of their fields, now a dream – such as she could see them spread out before her eyes. They had hired many men who earned their livelihood by working on the farm. Haji Hatoun was of a small minority among the remnants of the sword who was able to tell her sad story. Many of those who defied death and survived were in such trauma that they became introverts and incommunicative. The past was a concealed box of sadness.

Haji Hatoun was different. She could extricate herself from the horrors she had experienced and could describe with nostalgia and animation her beautiful farm in the east, her family and what had happened to them. In those days no one could use the word 'genocide'. They referred to the killings as 'military mobilization'. There was an irony behind this. The architect of the genocide, Talat, Minister of the Interior of the I & T Party, mobilized the army, gendarmerie and the Hamidiye

(Kurdish) battalions. The shrewd I & T trinity of Enver, Talat, and Jemal mobilized the Armenian nation for massacre.

Haji Hatoun would explain, “They gathered all the men in our general area, killed them with swords, axes and long knives. We also learned that many of our men were tortured. After a few days, they collected the women, girls, pregnant ladies and the old people. The order was that no person should be left on the farms. The mountains became our pathway of deportation to the desert town of Deir-el-Zor in Syria. Children were crying incessantly, mothers moaning, young girls screaming in panic. Muslim men from the surrounding villages would rush in, grab a girl and make off with her. Some gendarmes were actually selling girls. Five of my six children perished in front of my eyes; only this Araxi, who sleeps cuddled up to me, is left. Everyone knows her condition. The corpses of old folks were strewn everywhere. Children were dying. When we arrived at some brook, mothers would pray and cast their babies into the stream – some of them would follow their babies into a watery grave. A number of women went out of their minds, talking irrationally. What a horror it was! Through the daring act of an American philanthropic group, following a long and arduous trek, we were rescued and led to Istanbul to join other refugees. We found an old barracks where we could put our heads down. Since my arrival here, I have been washing clothes for different families.” At this point, Haji Hatoun would raise her voice in vexation: “To live as an Armenian and be abandoned to Talat’s mercy!”

The reader may wonder about this Talat who perpetuated the first organized genocide of the twentieth century and carried it meticulously to the end without flinching. He is of those tyrannical figures whose fearsome ghost horrifies the Armenians until now, a man who placed his imprint on history along with other merciless figures. He first appears as a chief telegram employee of the Ottomans in the very important city of Selanik (Thessaloniki). Here was a person in his forties who penetrated whoever he was addressing with piercing eyes; a bureaucrat who gave the impression of being a professor. He could convert his schemes into action. At that time, he had already achieved a certain status, but aspired to a higher position. Looking at him, we see a man of absolute determination to succeed, but also a person who expedited the demise of the Ottoman Empire. He was an important character about whom people are still writing and discussing. In the eyes of some Turks he is a hero, a man without fault. His post was Minister of the Interior, alongside with the given title of ‘Pasha’.

Life of Non-Muslims in the Empire

From the time of the inception of their rule, the Ottomans were a military government committed to the Islamic principle of *fateh* (conquest) in the name of Allah. This has been the coherent structure of their *modus operandi* since they appeared on the scene in the thirteenth century. Eventually they intermingled with the Selchuks. As a result of their expansion in every direction they acquired many non-Ottomans who were non-Muslims in the conquered lands. Ruling these primarily Christian people was not going to be easy. From the very outset they developed a methodical skill openly prescribed in the religion into which they had been drafted. It didn’t take them long to educate themselves on how to administer this diverse population: impose special taxes on non-Muslims, shrewdly convert masses to Islam, turn their churches, schools, etc., into mosques and madrasahs

(Quran schools) and to organize the administration of '*vakif*' (religious foundation created through prescribed endowment of properties). In simple terms, every religious property and contingent institution belongs to, and is governed by, '*vakiflar idaresi*' i.e., 'Department of Religious Endowments'. This religious-governmental branch is a functioning department of the state until now. Its function especially affects Christian churches and institutions in a negative way. This devious management has legally appropriated much property of the minorities, such as churches, theological schools, hospitals, shops and houses. One of the requirements on the agenda of the European Union's negotiation with Turkey is the abolishing of this 'state within a state' super-wealthy administration. This is going to be one of the hardest nuts to crack in dealing with Turkey.

The powerfully competent 'Janissary' institution founded in 1362 at the dawn of the empire was the most daring enactment of the nucleonic state. All members of this organization were first-born boys recruited from Christian families. This compulsory draft was known as '*devshirme*' (bringing together, folding up or rolling up). For well over three centuries this infantry branch of the army grew to be a very tough band of soldiers. These men had been deprived of family background. Some of them unrestrainedly delved into politics causing apprehension to the Porte. They were continuously contriving to gain more power, creating a precarious situation in the capital. Under the increasing influence of this institution the State felt threatened. In 1826 the emperor, Mahmut II, abolished the society of the Janissaries. The Greek population had found a way to get around this cruel enactment. When the authorities came to take the first-born son for the Janissary organization the parents said, "He's engaged." The officials were stunned. Then the family went on to explain how this had happened: "It is our practice to engage the boys and girls of friendly families from the cradle, so we engaged our boy to the daughter of such-and-such a family." Since no engaged or married person could join the Janissaries the boy was exempted from the draft. This practice passed into the language as '*beshik kertme* (or *kertigi*) *nishanli*', i.e., 'betrothed while still an infant' or literally, 'rubbing the cradles together'. Actually many of these infants eventually married and lived happily ever after.

Managing the diverse population by force required incalculable ingenuity. New methods were continually being implemented; old ones re-adjusted. The amazing competence of altering the existing demography in favor of the dominant nation, i.e., the Muslims, is a case for study. Very little has been done due to the sensitivity and meticulous secrecy of the Turks. Add to this, the lack of scholarly research of this vast area of the Ottoman rule.

Existing in a minority segment within old or new Turkey has always required the acumen of regulating one's individual or communal life in accordance with the trying situation at any given time. It is remarkable how people manage to survive, even advance, under such conditions. Human ingenuity in putting up with, or even overcoming, unfavorable circumstances while seeking to conduct themselves advantageously among the favored people is a skill in itself. This has been the achievement of divergent peoples in several countries who have found themselves in the midst of a Muslim populace. Loss of relevance, language, culture, property, churches, pockets of population, even life itself, doesn't necessarily eventuate in these peoples going under. Their drive to exist and carry on, reaching above the privileged and often hostile people, brings out the seed of survival from within.

Constitutional Monarchy

Talat established a firm friendship with Rahmi bey, one of the prominent figures of Selanik. Along with the participation of a few others, they formed a secret society which they called 'Ittihad ve Terakki' (Party of Union and Progress). The oppressive rule of Abdul Hamid II, who was known as the 'red sultan' because of his shedding so much blood, was intimidating everyone. Under the disturbing conditions of the time, the party became official and many distinguished people joined it. They gave the clear impression that their goal was to unite all the elements of the empire and push forward.

Prior to this, certain exiled Turkish intellectuals living in Paris formed a society which came to be known as 'Jeunes Turcs' (Young Turks). This progressive element made contact with the army officers in Macedonia led by Niyazi bey. He rebelled against the emperor in 1908. The movement spread with great momentum. The opportunist committee of I & T who had army backing was able to take it over. The Paris group believing that the favorable time had come joined with those in Selanik. At the outset the common goal of the two wings was to establish contact with the non-Muslim population in the east, recognize the equality of all, and extend favorable rights to them.

Also, the various ethnic groups in the Balkans were as restive as the Armenians. The Armenians were willing to put behind them the 1895 massacre by Abdul Hamid, in which a tenth of their people had been lost. In 1903, Armenian representatives from the east were invited to Selanik. Following secret negotiations they were promised particular rights as soon as the I & T assumed power. The Armenian representatives fully trusted their promises and covertly joined the I & T. Armenians and other ethnic groups in the Balkans would join forces under one flag, protected by the liberal constitution. This bright prospect brought satisfaction and enthusiastic anticipation to the Armenians and the other ethnic groups.

In 1908, the Macedonian army units marched to the capital under the name 'Hareket Ordusu', i.e., 'Action Army'. They were welcomed with extreme exuberance, especially by the minority folks. In July of the same year Abdul Hamid was obliged to re-adopt the constitution which he himself had abolished in 1876. His oppressive rule came to an end. In the newly-elected parliament, Greeks, Armenians, Jews, Bulgarians and other minorities were broadly represented. All people poured out onto the streets, embracing each other; imams, priests and rabbis were dancing in unison. But in November an unavoidable rift occurred between the liberal western group and the nationalistically-oriented trio – Enver, Talat and Jemal. While the Paris wing was dedicated to uncompromising freedom for all and to human rights, the militaristic-nationalistic group started looking back nostalgically for the autocratic days of Abdul Hamid. The western-oriented Young Turks were aspiring friendship and close ties with Britain and France, whereas the militaristic trio was strongly pro-German. The western group was pushed aside through cleverly-devised schemes. An event subtly engineered by the I & T government served the purpose of the militaristic trio very well. On March 31, 1909, a group of sharia-aspirants staged a revolt which was successfully crushed, nevertheless with bloodshed. Once those yearning for sharia were moved out of the scene Talat and his two friends found a unique opportunity to become master players of power

politics. From then on Talat moved forward to accomplish his hidden ambitions. The western intellectuals lost all influence.

The promises extended to the Armenian leaders in Selanik were long forgotten, leaving in their place increasingly harsh edicts. The prime issue in Talat's mind was the 'Armenian Question' and finding ways to resolve it. He actually wanted to be the solver himself. This way he would leave his legacy to the empire. In the mind of the trio, the suitable route to attain this goal was to join with the Central Alliance, i.e., Germany and Austro-Hungarian Empire. Talat was aware that England and France would never consent to his scheme. So were sown the seeds of the Armenian genocide in Talat's well-calculated thinking.

World War I

The I & T party had full control of the Ottoman Empire. In spite of its promising name all liberal assurances formerly made to different ethnic and national groups were conveniently dumped. The overshadowing dark clouds were the harbinger of a severe thunderstorm. The expectation of the trio was realized. In November 1914 the country was actually pushed into the war by the Germans. Two German battleships stationed in the Mediterranean forced their way through the Dardanelles, the British pursuing them. The British demanded that the Porte have these ships turned over to them. But the I & T rulers refused and consequently the Ottomans found themselves entangled in the war. All hell broke loose on all the people of the empire. In the east, Armenians were especially in the line of fire. On one side were the forces of Czarist Russia and on the other side the army of the Ottoman Empire, whose citizens they were. Two and a half million Armenians were aspiring to create their own homeland, already promised to them by the I & T in Selanik. Let alone the realization of this earnest longing, they were going to lose everything they had, including their lives. The I & T government compelled the emperor-caliph to declare 'jihad' against the western powers. But Muslims in the British Empire ignored the call to revolt.

However, I & T declared its own jihad against the Armenians in April 1915. Their solution was ethnic cleansing. With this in view, the barrage was let loose in all its savagery. Talat declared that, "Armenians are enemies of the Turks; they cannot be trusted." He made not only himself believe this, but sought to convince the Muslim populace that this was the case. So the horrifying chapter of the massacre was opened. This frightful period coincided with the Allied landing in Gallipoli on April 25, 1915. Had the invading entente forces succeeded in knocking out the Ottoman Empire at that time by reaching and capturing Constantinople, the Armenian massacre would have been suppressed. But when the unsuccessful Allies evacuated the Gallipoli peninsula on January 9, 1916, Talat found himself entirely free to execute his long-intended design.

During this sad period countless Armenian men were brutally killed and the rest deported. Armenian soldiers serving in the Ottoman army were converted into units of ordinary laborers. The destination of the deportees was Deir-el-Zor in the vast Syrian desert. The objective was to let banished people die on the way. But whoever survived would have to make the long journey. Masses were uprooted from every city and town. Armenian farms, shops, houses, churches, schools and all other institutions and possessions would be taken over by the local people.

Constantinople, being the capital, was exempted from this merciless decree. In the midst of the awful impending grief, there was a redeeming element in Izmir. Through the extraordinary courage of the governor, the Armenians in this city were spared. The rest of the country did not have the same good fortune.

Allied Germany was troubled, but the ambassador, Baron Hans von Wangenheim, was a personal friend of the Kaiser. His sole pursuance was to protect German interests. Kaiser Wilhelm II visited Constantinople twice, bequeathing the famous fountain to the Sultan as a gift. This is still standing in Sultan Ahmed Square, between St. Sophia and the Blue Mosque. The Germans built the opulent Bahnhof (main railroad station) at Haydarpasha on the Asiatic side of Constantinople. It was during these troubled years that a large German construction team under chief engineer Heinrich August Meissner undertook the completion of the grand project of building a railroad line all the way to Basra. Meissner, 1862-1940, was born in Leipzig. After the completion of the Baghdad Railroad, he occupied a chair at the Technical University of Istanbul for railway design. He became a pasha and died in Turkey.

The German team opened a number of tunnels under the prohibitive Taurus Mountain Range and built an amazing wood bridge high over the Euphrates River so that even when the river flooded, trains could pass safely over it. Another section of this railroad complex was laid to Mecca to assist Muslim pilgrims. The Kaiser's chief pursuit was to have jurisdiction over 'the three B's' – Berlin, Baghdad, Basra. Naturally, this strategic route would have to go over Constantinople. This would expedite the German empire's ambitions of reaching all the way to the Indian Ocean. Conveniently, some German authorities termed the Armenians 'a restless ethnic element', thus facilitating the Ottomans in carrying out their dastardly plan. On the other hand, Armenian railroad workers were reliable and industrious, according to German employee reports. Ironically, following the defeat of Germany this ambitious German enterprise served their antagonists, the British. The following piece will be of interest to students of Middle Eastern history.

The Big Boys Play Dirty

While on the surface Great Britain initially supported the German railway, shrewdly watching as the Germans footed the bill for laying the rails and pouring money into the project, she was also keenly aware that it would one day compete with British trade in Mesopotamia and bypass British tariffs in the process. Therefore, Britain was silently making even more secret deals with France, eyeing eventual free access by sea to the oil fields of Persia and fast access by rail along the Gulf coast. She was also picking up more global investors in her interests.

In 1911, after the railway company proposed a branch line which would have spiked trade with Northern Syria and the Northern Mesopotamian valley, the plan was vetoed by Great Britain's vested financial interests. In 1913, First Lord of the Admiralty Winston Churchill "anticipated" a world war that would need oil-powered ships, and on June 17, 1914, he urged the British government to spend £2 million to buy a majority interest of Anglo-Persian Oil Company, financed in part by his father's old friends at the

Rothschild Bank. The *London Petroleum Review* published a map on May 23, 1914 of Mesopotamia showing the oilfields that Britain hoped to eventually obtain.

Back to the topic of the Armenian Massacre: It is no wonder that after ninety years the German parliament, media and historians are seeking ways to show the genocide in all its ugliness and to point their finger at the injustice committed by the Second Reich under Kaiser Wilhelm II. Germans go to great lengths to demonstrate that they don't condone the genocide. Germany's dealing with her own ignominious past stretches further back than the Third Reich. Those Germans who know the sad events of history and the subsequent morass are troubled that the genocide was copied in a more horrendous magnitude and artful style by Hitler and Goebbels. It is widely acknowledged that Adolph Hitler once said: "Who still discusses the extermination of the Armenians?" The Germans have long acknowledged what the demised Third Reich did to the Jews and other ethnic groups. Through owning up to the holocaust, they are finding therapy for their psyche. However, Turkish officialdom still does not admit the cold-blooded ruthlessness of the Ottoman government.

The Germans did not acknowledge the Nazi brutalities overnight. During the Nurnberg trials in 1946, the top men of the Third Reich were shown films depicting the brutalities of the defunct savage regime of which they had been a part. With callous heart each of them declared that he neither saw nor knew anything of these events. As is generally known, most of them were hung. A new generation was born which objectively approached the cruelties of the immediate past. Gradually a spirit of confession and concession came to the younger generation of the German nation.

Nevertheless, in the past few years the Neo-Nazi philosophy has been embraced by a segment of young Germans, and their spirit of racism is reflected in violent attacks of non-Germans and also of Jewish institutions. While their attitudes and behavior are abhorred by most people, they do draw sympathizers and their numbers continue to grow. They meet in organized cells where they inflame their followers by fiery rhetoric, songs and marches. They are recognized by their shaved heads and heavy boots. They have a large cache of arms. They go around instigating extremism among young people, particularly in the eastern part of the country. Ordinary people are afraid of them. Drawing a parallel of what is happening in Germany, the surge of extreme nationalism in Turkey comes to mind and is very upsetting. With such a strong element of chauvinism there is a constant drift to further radicalism. I wonder if Turkey will be at liberty to make an admission of past offences with such a wave of determined nationalism.

Delayed Law Concerning Genocide

Nearly one hundred years have elapsed since the first merciless genocide of the past century. The adoption of an article in the Turkish penal code about 'genocide and crime against humanity' sheds much light on the disregarded initial genocide of the twentieth century.

The acknowledgement that genocides do occur, as put forth in the new Turkish code of punitive offences, shows some sensitivity on the part of the Turks concerning the subject. Therefore, it is apropos to carry into these pages the despicable events of

the early part of the twentieth century. The iniquitous doings of the past are thus referred to in thought-provoking language. Through the accepted penal code Turkey shows her need of taking a position against genocide. However, along with this it would have been a virtuous venture to expose the heartless acts of the defunct regime, i.e., the Union and Progress administration, treating it as it deserved to be dealt with. This would have brought catharsis to the psyche of the Turk and made a vital contribution to rectify past injustices.

New article in the Turkish penal code regarding genocides:

SOYKIRIM (Genocide) – Article 76

1. The execution carried against the members of a racial or religious group, aiming to annihilate them partially or wholly in order to fulfill an envisioned plan, constitutes the offence of genocide.
 - a. Deliberate killing
 - b. Causing heavy infliction on the physical and mental well-being of the individual
 - c. Compelling people to live under conditions which will eventuate in the extinction of the group partially or wholly
 - d. Taking steps toward preventing childbirth in the group
 - e. Transferring children by force from one group to another
2. The offender of the law concerning genocide is liable to aggravated life imprisonment. Furthermore, offences within the realm of genocide are to be handled in accordance with those involving deliberate killing and deliberate injuring. The strict code of offences against a community takes into consideration the number of aggrieved people.
3. Those offences involving people in jurisprudence are liable to judicial action.
4. There is no statute of limitation against such an offence.

Why not follow Willi Brandt's Example?

It was a poignant and touching spectacle. There at the foot of the Warsaw Ghetto Memorial depicting the nationalistic savagery, the German chancellor, Willi Brandt was humbly kneeling with pain of heart. He was seeking pardon from Almighty God and the whole world for the bestial atrocities committed by the leaders of his country a generation before. At the time, most folks in pleasant surprise said, "Bravo, Willi Brandt!" However there were many Germans whose allegiance had not changed from that treacherous period in their recent history; these revolted at the remarkable sight. But gallant Willi Brandt later said he had no other option than to do what he did. He thus left his mark on the sad history of his country and the whole world. It was through such singular acts that the German nation came to realize the brutalities of the Third Reich, and experienced the therapy which couldn't have come any other way. Brandt assumed the shame of the past and reached the decision to show his genuine sorrow in this befitting way.



Willi Brandt kneeling at the Jewish Memorial in Warsaw, Poland

How do the Turks react to the world-wide acknowledgement of the Armenian pogrom? They tenaciously disown it, going even a step further by condemning the Armenians for directing genocide against Turkish Muslims in Anatolia. This repudiation cannot bring catharsis to their suicidal soul. The universal prayer is that somehow they will be confronted with Jeremiah's prophetic word and listen to Allah's voice. The weeping prophet describes a development which can alter the whole picture. *"And it shall come to pass that as I have watched over them to pluck up and break down, to overthrow, destroy, and bring evil, so I will watch over them to build and to plant, says the LORD. In those days they shall no longer say: 'The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge.'" (Jeremiah 31:28, 29).*

The Turks need not feel bad about the cruel act of a defunct regime. Just as German history is smeared with blood, so is the Turkish and I dare say, that of the Russian, American and every other nation. It is well known that nations seek to whitewash the dark side of their history. The just God has a rule for internal and external catharsis. No one can violate it. The unacceptable conduct of too many nations is working to their own peril. While one applauds Willi Brandt's dauntless expression of sorrow, it is too bad that we cannot think the same way about the leaders of Japan, who still burn incense at the grave of war criminals whose atrocities cause deep grief until now. Japanese school books don't mention the deranged conduct of their past leaders. Nations are masters in concealing the reprehensible aspects of their own history. But once again I refer to the Scriptures, be it to Turks or to any other nation. It is not intended by this to denigrate the Turkish nation; conversely to point the way to national therapy. The word written three thousand years ago will ever hold true: *"He who conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will obtain*

mercy... If a man is burdened with the blood of another, let him be a fugitive until death; let no one help him" (Proverbs 28:13, 17).

Protest and Reactions

The United States ambassador to the Porte at the time was Henry Morgenthau, father of the person of the same name who was President Roosevelt's Treasury Secretary. These people were Jews, defenders of human rights. Ambassador Morgenthau fearlessly spoke out against the massacre and made every possible effort to stop it. But with no success. His memoirs – recently translated into Turkish by some daring intellectuals – tell of his painstaking struggle in Constantinople against the unbending Minister of Interior, Talat. In fact, at one point Talat reacted quite angrily. He mulishly took the ambassador to task. In exasperation he remarked: "The Armenian problem is our concern; nobody has the right to intervene with the fitting punishment we are executing. The government has authorized me to take care of the matter." Then Talat went on to speak to Henry Morgenthau with a subtle reminder: "See how we treat the Jewish people. We keep excellent relations with them. Doesn't that suffice? Why are you complaining?" Behind these words was hidden the well-known Ottoman tactic, '*Ayir buyur siyaseti*' (i.e., the policy of '*divide and rule*'). Talat's justification for treating one people group above the other backfires in the light of political correctness demanded in our time, when the issue of human rights irrespective of any particular group once again haunts the Turkish government. They cannot extricate themselves from this thorny issue before the eyes of the world.

The ambassador remarked: "I am beginning to better understand that Talat is endowed with the total power of I & T." In a report sent to the Germans, Talat boasted, "I could do in three months what Abdul Hamid could not accomplish in thirty years." The Germans bore the burden of the Ottomans to the end. The Central Alliance ultimately received its inescapable recompense. Thus the first genocide of the twentieth century was carried out systematically and mercilessly to the very end with mobilization, killings and expulsions by Talat's callous ingenuity. What language can describe the series of genocides which happened in the century left behind? Later, Joseph Stalin would effectuate similar cruelties in dungeons and gulags. Hitler would carry Jews, Romas and other segments of the population to gas chambers. Mao Tse-tung with his own ingenuity exterminated millions of his people. Repugnant genocides were carried out in Kampuchea, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Rwanda, Darfur (Sudan) and other parts of Africa. We can term the last century 'a hundred years of despicable shame'.

After Talat executed his mandate to massacre the Armenians to the bitter end, he witnessed the defeat of the Ottoman Empire and the demise of I & T. The only place he could find refuge was in Berlin. One day while enjoying his stroll he felt a tap on his shoulder. Turning back to see who it was he got a bullet through his head from a determined Armenian, Solomon Tehlyrian. Tehlyrian had lost his whole family to the Talat-conducted massacre, so Talat was taken from one world of cruelty to another. What did the Prince of Peace say? "*...all who take the sword will perish by the sword*" (Matthew 26:52b). "*The heavens will reveal his iniquity, and the earth will rise up against him*" (Job 20:27).

Elementary School Years

From the very early years of a child, his parents concentrate their thinking on his forthcoming schooling, especially among minorities in Turkey. This was particularly true of my mother. Greeks, Armenians and Jews in Turkey have been minorities for centuries. There were several million minority folks throughout Asia Minor in the years preceding WWI. Following the unimaginable tragedies of the war the numbers of minorities dwindled and were confined more-or-less to Constantinople. The name of the city was changed to Istanbul by Ataturk, leader of the newly-established Republic of Turkey. It was no longer the capital city. The new capital had already been created in Ankara during Mustafa Kemal's War of Independence which terminated with his victory over the Greeks at the capture of Izmir (Smyrna) on September 9, 1922.

This outcome necessitated a new treaty with the Turks. The conference was held in Lausanne and the treaty was signed in that city on July 24, 1923. Turkey gained extensive rights in many areas and especially on the issue of the minorities. All minority schools, even churches, fell under government regulation (*Vakıflar İdaresi*). Every minority school was obliged to have a Turkish superintendent who was given authority over the ethnic director of the school. In the case of the Greeks, the curriculum was in Greek for language, mathematics and a few other classes. However, there was a compulsory curriculum in Turkish, namely, the Turkish language, history, geography, and some other subjects. The rules applied to every minority school.

There were some unfortunate minority groups, such as the Arameans, whose status was not covered by issues dealt with at the Lausanne Conference and consequently they were left without their own schools. All Aramaic (Assyrian) children, namely in the southeastern part of Turkey, could only attend Turkish government schools. So they were hindered from being educated in their own language and culture. They were limited to conversational Aramaic at home. Parents eager to have their children taught their own language sent them to Aramaic monasteries, pretending they were serving as altar boys. Here they were secretly taught to read and write Aramaic. The situation is the same until now. This has resulted in the suppression of one of the most ancient scripts. Now, large groups of Arameans and Assyrians who migrated to freedom in the western European countries are reviving their nearly-extinct language, culture, and history.

There was a Greek elementary school in close proximity to the Greek Orthodox Church in Kuzgunjuk. The school was an old wooden mansion belonging to a rich Greek family. In September 1931, my mother took me by the hand and registered me in this school. It was known as *Kuzgunjuk Rum Mektebi*. The minority Greeks in Turkey are referred to as *Rum* (pronounced 'Room'), remnant of the defunct Eastern Roman Empire. The word *Mektep*, being of Arabic origin, was discarded by modern Turkey, in favor of *Okul* (school). I should mention here that all the pupils belonged to the Greek Orthodox Church. Our family, being Protestant and so designated in our identity books, was an oddity. The principal of the school, Evangelos Philotis, a venerable older man, kindly received my mother. During the process of registering me, my mother mentioned to Mr. Philotis that we were not Orthodox, but Evangelicals. He took it with understanding. He was a good educator

and a stern disciplinarian whose spankings I and so many other boy students could not escape. We actually deserved them.

When I started school I could hardly converse in my own language (Greek) since we spoke Turkish at home. Yiayia Despina and Uncle Polycarpus did not know Greek at all. In the various regions of Anatolia where Greeks lived, the two different languages were used. Greeks living in Cappadocia and some other places were more-or-less compelled to speak Turkish. In contrast to this, the Pontian Greeks in the Black Sea area, as well as those living in the Aegean region around Smyrna (Izmir) and of course Constantinople, along with a few other places, used Greek almost exclusively. This did not please the Turks. There was a motto often heard, "*Vatandash Turkche konush!*" ("Fellow-citizen, speak Turkish!")

When Mr. Philotis saw that my Greek was very limited, he said, "We will put you into Kindergarten." This was to give me an opportunity to learn the basics of Greek. The kindergarteners were in the same school room with the first graders, so I could listen to the first-grade lessons and I soon caught on to the language. Learning was done mostly by rote. My teachers, all women, were diligent, but had no idea about bringing variety or interesting innovations into the classroom. Being born and reared in Turkey was a handicap from the beginning. My background has had a negative impact on many areas of my life, I can say, until now. I was short-changed. Education in Turkey is pretty much taught from the vantage point of Islam, which was influencing even the non-Turkish schools. Especially evident is the nationalistic tendency of modern Turkey which plays the paramount role in education. We were not infused with the delight and pleasure of learning. Discipline was rather primitive and strict; whacking was not excluded from the application of training. Even the custodian woman, Mrs. Harikleia, would give us a good spanking from time to time. One day my mother, with her background of missionary school training, was angry with Mrs. Harikleia's spanking me, so she went to Mr. Philotis to tell him of her repugnance of the custodian's conduct. The principal replied that such things could happen in school when discipline was needed. My quick-witted mother abruptly responded, "Then leave your position to Harikleia." She was a true matriarch in our family.

A very denigrating routine was to expose pupils – especially boys – who did not obey the rules, to severe punishment. The teacher would write *Ataktos* (naughty) on a sheet of paper, or if he did not know his lesson properly, *Tembelis* (lazy), or *Kakos* (bad). She would pin the paper on the child's back and oblige him to stand facing the wall in the cold entry hall exposing him to everyone coming in and going out. We had a very likeable fellow in our class, Constantinos Aydonides (*Aydoni* is nightingale). He did not sing, but disturbed the teacher by talking. First the teacher warned him. But Constantinos continued. She finally called him to the front, wrote *Ataktos* on a sheet of paper, pinned it on his back and put him in the hall with his face to the wall, exposing the writing for all to see.

About twenty minutes later we heard a loud commotion. One of the students sitting near the window informed the class, "O Aydonides fevgi!" (Aydonides is leaving!) We all jumped out of our seats and looked out of the windows. We saw the poor boy hastily running up the steep ascent, a dirt road, next to the school. In great frustration, he was tearing the paper from off his back and gesturing insultingly, "Away with your paper!" I can never forget the scene. My heart was torn apart for

my friend. I wondered if this was what school life was supposed to be. Within a half hour, Constantinos' mother appeared with her son, protesting to Mr. Philotis for the shameful treatment of her child. It is a great pity that Constantinos eventually dropped out of school – and who wouldn't have done the same? If this school had been under the supervision of the New England missionaries, the situation would have been diametrically different. Throughout my life, I often thought of my good-hearted friend Constantinos. He died without my ever seeing him again.

It was 1932 when I was in first grade. One evening Father returned from his work, grief-stricken. He lay on one corner of the couch and started weeping inconsolably. We were all in shock. Mother asked him, "What happened, Mihali?" He stretched out his hand, giving her a letter. It was from his youngest brother Costas in Piraeus, informing him that Vasil Agha had died. Extremely sad for my father, but how joyful for Pappou Vasil! He was with his Redeemer whom he had trusted many years before. This did not occur to me then, but now I can see that those who die in Christ are blessed. Yiayia Eleni lived in their house for another ten years. Greece was occupied by the Nazi armies from 1941 to 1945, during which time a million Greeks perished, most from hunger. Grandma Eleni was among them. She starved to death. Uncle Costas later informed us that they had found her dead, all alone in the house. Her corpse was swollen. But the great comfort was that she had gone to be with her husband and above all, with her Savior.

Under the Sway of Nationalism

It had been ten years since the Greek army was defeated by the Turks in Smyrna. The 'Great Catastrophe' was still fresh in everyone's mind. A pronounced nationalistic sentiment prevailed among the Turks. Under these circumstances we were taught some of our subjects by Turkish teachers. I can never forget the sentiments of *Shefik bey* (Mr. Shefik). He exuded an air of triumph over the Greeks. He would always remind us that the Turks defeated the Greeks and captured Izmir. Only those who have lived as minority people in an Islamic land can know that such derogatory talk cannot and should not be answered. Every minority person must assume the attitude of pliancy. We would listen patiently to the openly expressed nationalistic sentiments of *Shefik bey* and remain in total silence. We outwardly consented to what he was saying, but inwardly resented every word he spoke.

Departing from this subject for a moment, one day I was sitting in the boat going from Kuzgunjuk to the European side of the city. This was a twenty-minute ride. A young Greek Orthodox priest was sitting on the upper deck reading his Greek newspaper. Across from him were three or four bearded fanatics loudly carrying on a conversation among themselves which contained the nastiest insults against the Christian faith. Their talk was loaded with the classical attacks of Muslims against Christians. They carried on all the way to the city. The young priest did not dare to move. They would have been insulted. He continued to read his paper, very calmly ignoring them. They egged him on trying to draw him into their unrestrained barrage against the Christians. But he ignored them, not saying a word. When they arrived at their destination the priest got up from his seat, kindly nodded his head in a parting greeting and walked away. One of the group triumphantly jeered, "Didn't we give him a good dressing down?" From the time of my childhood, I always heard the same story, i.e., that Islam is a tolerant religion. Indeed, it is

tolerant when it suits their purpose, but ill-natured when someone dares to cross them.

Our house was on a higher elevation than our Greek school. Daily my sisters and I walked from the top of the hill down to sea-level, where the school was. Kuzgunjuk was a very pleasant section on the Bosphorus, with ferry-boats coming and going all day long. They would frequently make stops disgorging passengers who all tried to be first, and then taking on others at the gangplank. Once in a while an overambitious passenger would try to jump onto the wharf before the boat actually came up to the dock. Most managed the jump, but occasionally some poor fellow would find himself in the sea, which was very dangerous because he could get crushed without the captain ever seeing him.

It was a delightful scene watching the approaching boats come in. Each ship was equipped with a hawser – often well-worn – which a man on the boat would sling with great force and flair to his counterpart at the wharf. This man in turn would catch the rope with an air of success, immediately dropping it onto the low stumpy mushroom-like iron pole and wrapping it around as the slip-knot got tighter and tighter until the boat jarred the platform with a dull thud. Old tires around the platform protected both ship and wharf from damage. The loop of the rope was known as *chima*, an Italian word which had somehow been integrated into Turkish. The men dealing with these ropes were known as *chimaji*. Sometimes the captain of the boat was not quite skillful and the rope was stretched with such strain that it snapped. When this happened, everyone would burst out laughing and the *chimaji* on the boat would desperately try to find another rope to throw in order for the boat to be brought in. Some of us had lazy tendencies in the classroom. The teacher would get very aggravated if we didn't know our lessons and in her anger would yell, "You're all going to be a bunch of *chimajis* if you don't shape up and study your lessons!"

The Greek Orthodox Church with which our school was associated was right around the corner. Church and school kept together the linguistic-religious identity of the young pupils. This was a defense mechanism to protect the Greek children from the barrage of Turkish nationalism. When my mother registered me at school, after mentioning to the principal, Mr. Philotis, that we were Evangelicals, she also reminded him that we should not be compelled to cross ourselves. He took this with understanding. Later when my two sisters entered the same school, this exemption applied to them as well. Every morning the students gathered in the hall, the teacher recited a few Orthodox prayers and then the students would cross themselves. We took our places with the rest but abstained from crossing ourselves. Often the other pupils would deride us for not attending the Orthodox Church, not kissing the icons, not crossing ourselves, etc. However, I must add that the principal's and teachers' attitude was very wholesome. They would often stop the fellow-students, especially the boys, from jeering at us. When the whole student body was taken to the Greek Orthodox Church on holy days, we would simply walk home. We endured this isolation. The priest of the church was Father Andreas, who was seldom seen without a cigarette between his fingers. It must have come to his attention that the three Cosmades kids were Protestants. One day as I was walking past the church, Father Andreas called out to me. He kindly asked me who I was and why I wasn't attending church. I don't remember my reply. Anyway, his curiosity must have been satisfied and he never broached the subject again.

My six years in the elementary school in Kuzgunjuk passed like a dream. Many valuable memories remain fresh in my mind. Often I recall the friends with whom I used to play. From what I have learned, most of them are now deceased. On my several visits to Istanbul I sought the opportunity to contact at least a few of them, but I did not succeed in doing so; those still alive had left the country. In my case, the recollection of childhood friendships didn't fade away. In the midst of those years our principal, Mr. Evangelos Philotis, was fired by one of the austere administrators of the Orthodox Church. Church and school were under the same leadership. The old manager, Mr. Hajetoglu, was an individualistic authoritarian person. He was an uneducated Cappadocian, whereas Mr. Philotis was a cultured, balanced educator. Apparently Mr. Philotis didn't go along with Mr. Hajetoglu's whimsical ideas, so he was eased out. Hajetoglu had already decided on the next principal, Mrs. Sotyria Papatheodorou. There were no more spankings since Mrs. Sotyria did not carry a stick. However, I was quite accustomed to Mr. Philotis' exact discipline. On one hand, I missed him; but on the other I immediately adjusted to our new principal.

Our principal and all the teachers were under strict orders by the Turkish Ministry of Education never to teach any particulars regarding the history of Greece, Greek culture or heroes of the Greek civilization. Kyria (Mrs.) Sotyria was an ardent enthusiast of our country's history. She often broke the rule and told the class about the glory of ancient Greece. The students liked it, but she was risking her position, even her legal status as educator. Obviously, no student betrayed her confidence. I am glad to have learned a few isolated facts about Greek history and past glory, thanks to our courageous principal. So deep was Turkish dislike of anything Greek and its surpassing civilization, that there was no winking of the eye for such a daring venture as Mrs. Sotyria's. One day she took the whole school to the ancient cathedral of St. Sophia. With what delight she explained to all of us the grandeur of this imperial church!

History lessons were taught in Turkish from books uniformly prepared by the Turkish Ministry of Education. When I started school, nationalism was vigorously advancing. It affected the whole spectrum of education. I well remember our Turkish history book. In referring to the progress of civilization not a word was squandered on the Golden Age of Athens or what contribution ancient Greece made to the advance of learning, art, theater, philosophy, etc. Instead, our history books displayed a map of Central Asia from where Turks hailed. It was pompously depicted that modern civilization originated in this area, from where these people dispersed in all directions. Most shocking of all, people having to do with the spread of civilization were assumed to have Turkish origin. The map of Central Asia was depicted with arrows going out in every direction. Tribes of Turks were identified with nations of antiquity: Hittite Turks, Elamite Turks, Sumerian Turks, Lydian Turks, Scythian Turks, Kadeshian Turks, Accadian Turks, etc. These ridiculous history books were withdrawn within a few years. They must be stored somewhere in the archives of the Ministry of Education. The seeds of nationalism were sown with an unsurpassed magnitude of hyperbolism in the twenties and thirties. Turkish nationalism of our present time stretches back to that Pandora box.

Some of the approximately eighty students came from poor families. Every day they carried a meager lunch with them, but my lunch was always ample, prepared by my

dotting mother. I developed a deep sympathy for these poor fellow-students, sitting in a corner eating olives and cheese with their bread. Our lunches, in contrast, were a real meal with meat-balls, stuffed peppers, etc. We used to warm our food on the wood stove at school. Unfortunately, some of these poor students had to quit school and go to work. However, this proved profitable to a few of them, as they acquired a good trade from an early age, such as making jewelry, learning carpentry, lathing, etc. Every spring our principal used to arrange all-day outings with picnic lunch, to one of the attractive sites along the Bosphorus. Mothers joined their children. This way they got to know the other mothers. Traveling with a group of youngsters on the Bosphorus ships was a special treat. Students were exuberant with joy, running around on board, playing and singing. On one of these occasions, an older fellow started singing Greek folk songs on the deck. All of a sudden, a young military cadet approached our group with a nationalistic air and a stern warning to stop singing in Greek. This interference demoralized our singing friend and the rest of us. Such unpleasanties were not unusual. We had to toe the line in our daily conduct, no matter where we were.

The Kuzgunjuk school lacked a year of the required elementary curriculum due to lack of finances. Following the completion of the five years, Kyria Sotyria took another boy and me to the famous Greek gymnasium in Fanari near the Ecumenical Patriarchate on the Golden Horn. She was going to register us for the sixth year. The principal, Mr. Zachariades, showed very kind interest and matriculated us in this historic Greek institution for boys. The red brick building is a very attractive structure until the present day, but has only a handful of students now, as there are only two thousand Greeks left in the city. The school stands on an elevated level on the shores of the Golden Horn. Its benevolent founder who donated money for the building of this gymnasium had even built a planetarium on top of it for the training of students good in science. After some years of functioning, it was not approved by the Ottoman Ministry of Education and was forced into disuse. Suspicion of the minorities was ever on the agenda of the government.

The school was a well-recognized institution, teaching the traditional Constantinopolitan Greek with many other subjects, including French. I enjoyed my one year in this school. However, I often joined some of the students in mischief. As I look back now, I wish I had concluded my lyceum training here and then switched to the study of English. This would have happened had my mother not made other plans. She decided to take me out of this good center of Greek learning and register me at the famous Robert College in Bebek. Her decision was final.

Robert College

In the process, mother took me to the grandiose Robert College on the beautiful hills of the European side of the Bosphorus. I was registered as a beginner in the academy. Robert College, which opened in 1863, is renowned as being the oldest American College on foreign soil. An American philanthropist from New York, Mr. Christopher Rheinlander Robert, allotted a good sum of money to establish this institution. After a great deal of bargaining and red tape, the Ottoman Porte offered, almost for a stipend, this choice land on the hills of the Bosphorus on the European side. The academic center established here took the name of its founder, i.e., Robert College. His hope was to offer sound education leading to a college degree,

based on English. He had no difficulty in selecting the first president, the Reverend Dr. Cyrus Hamlin, who was in Constantinople as a missionary of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions. Dr. Hamlin was an adventurous individual.

At the time, bread made in the Istanbul bakeries was almost inedible. Dr. Hamlin saw the great need of producing tasty and nutritious bread. He started a modern bakery to supply such bread for the local inhabitants. His bread soon became renowned throughout the city. Instead of the gritty, half-baked, doughy loaves, now delicious light loaves poured out of the ovens of this bakery while people waited to snatch them up for their daily consumption. Mr. Christopher Robert, who was on a Mediterranean cruise wanted to know the person who had initiated the production of such delicious bread. When the two met, Dr. Hamlin suggested to him the brilliant idea of starting an American college in this famous eastern capital. The thought appealed to Mr. Robert and he appointed Dr. Hamlin as the founder and first president. Dr. Hamlin was an enterprising man who actually labored physically to help build the first building, which bears his name. He did lose a finger in the process! For anyone interested in reading an enthralling article about the college – now taken over by the Turkish government and functioning as ‘Bogazici Universitesi’ (Bosphorus University) – I recommend that the person go to a National Geographic collection and find the September 1957 issue for a thorough treatment of the beginnings and progress of this famous school.

When I started Robert Academy at the age of fourteen in September 1938 I didn’t know any English. However, learning the language was fast and enjoyable. English was the main language of the curriculum. Every morning I got up early, walked to Kuzgunjuk and caught the ferry to Bebek, arriving there a half hour later. Then I walked up the hill to the college, which took another fifteen-twenty minutes. Our English language classes were taught by young American teachers who eagerly sought to work the English into our fresh minds. Some students did very well, while others progressed slowly. Most of the subjects, like Mathematics, Algebra and Geometry were taught in English. I liked the language from the very outset, but was only an average student in the sciences. I should mention our gym class, which was unequalled by other schools and highly demanding. Our gym teacher was a Russian, Mr. Alexander Nadolski, who in 1917 as a young fellow had escaped from his country following the Communist revolution. There was no fooling around with him. Physical discipline was everything to the strict gymnast. He was a well-recognized fencer in Istanbul, which was a discipline for the elite at the time.

The school also had an extensive carpentry workshop to teach the students woodworking. Our carpentry teacher was a very kind Turkish man who earnestly tried to get us interested in this practical skill. I made a few useful pieces. One was a small windmill for which I received a good grade. I placed this windmill in our garden in Kuzgunjuk facing the Bosphorus and would watch it twirl in the wind. I liked to admire my piece of handiwork. Robert College also had one of the choicest libraries in the country with thousands of volumes, including many historically valuable books in English, Turkish and other languages, such as the ancient dialects used in Asia Minor. In later years I tried to secure a reproduction of these sources of information, but nationalism had reached in this direction as well. The books with unusual material on the Anatolian local dialects had vanished.

Our Turkish curriculum was of a high standard. It was geared to the requirement of the Turkish Ministry of Education. The subjects were: Turkish language and literature, history, geography and political science, all taught by qualified Turkish instructors. I was top student in Turkish language and literature, even though I came from a minority background. I surpassed many Turkish students. Everything was in God's plan to prepare me for a future ministry about which I had no clue at the time. Much later I would be converted to Christ, be called to the ministry, primarily using Turkish, speak on the radio daily for fourteen years and translate the New Testament as well as writing other pieces. The Apostle Paul explains my feelings in succinct language: *"How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!" (Romans 11:33).*

I should add that God had his way in my upbringing, even though I was a sinner with little inkling of what lay ahead. I was not governed by Christian principles and a clear-cut goal. Among my fellow-students I was in somewhat of a unique position. I had some knowledge of God's Word, was attending church and had the influence of my Puritan grandmother. But all these did not make a genuine dent in my inner world until God's appointed time arrived. My peers were made up of several national identities: primarily Turks, then Armenians, Greeks, Jews, Russians, Bulgarians and a few others. I remember the day of Ataturk's death, November 10, 1938. A number of Ataturk's top men had their sons, including the future prime minister of Turkey, Bülent Ecevit, in this school. When Ataturk's anticipated death was announced these young boys gathered together and cried inconsolably. Some of their fathers were to eventually lose their favored position and influence in the government.

While in school, I witnessed the start of World War II, Pearl Harbor and the very hard times brought on by the war. In 1941, I finished Robert Academy with favorable grades and in September of the same year started as freshman at the College level. Right at that time, at the start of the school year, an inner spiritual crisis overwhelmed me due to several factors which affected my family. How I wish I had had a wise person around and personal willingness to turn to him or her for Christian counseling. Furthermore, school counselors were unknown in those days. Had this institution had a counselor to assist students in their crises, matters could have been different. However, I was quite hard-headed, self-motivated and totally pessimistic. Plans which I was unwilling to share with anyone took over my unprotected inner world. This was the serious crisis of an unguided boy who until then had sailed through ordinary home and school life. But the third dimension to my life was missing, i.e., commitment to the Savior, a meaningful relationship to him and a purpose for life. This lack was to bring disaster to my path.

In retrospect, I could have been delivered from the crisis I was encountering and been guided to safer waters. But, alas, there was no commitment to Christ. My troubled mindset continued for another seven years. Without telling my parents anything, one morning in my deep defeatism I made my way to the registrar's office, where I announced my decision to quit school. The registrar, Mr. Angelides, a Greek, was shocked. He tried to talk me out of it, but my decision was final. After just a week of school, I dropped out of the freshman class. What a shame... What a pity... In the middle of the day, I returned home and told my mother what I had done. It was God's mercy that the poor woman didn't have a stroke or heart attack. My selfish, uncalculated decision became a matter of grief in our home. I found myself

without school, without a job and without a goal or ambition, and worst of all, without Christ the Savior to steer me through the storms which lay ahead. To this I shall return later.

Our Family's Church Life

Church attendance was a tradition in our family. On Sundays we went to our evangelical church. There were no midweek prayer gatherings, much less Sunday school classes for children. How much I would have been helped if I had been given this privilege! I should mention that spiritual life in our churches during my childhood was at a very low ebb. My father attended the only Greek Evangelical Church, actually a small chapel nestled inconspicuously in the back of the huge palm-lined compound of the Swedish Consulate. He served as elder there for some years. The consulate was located on the main boulevard of Beyoglu (Pera) in Istanbul. At the end of the nineteenth century the Greek evangelical community needed a place to worship on the Beyoglu side of the city, i.e., the New City, which is separated from the Old City by the Golden Horn. There was no Swedish Lutheran community in Constantinople and the beautiful little chapel was unused. When the Greek evangelicals applied to the Consulate to use their chapel the Swedes were very ready to allow them to meet regularly. In fact, a royal decree was issued that the Greek evangelicals could use the Swedish chapel as long as they wanted, and that without rent! They were only responsible for its upkeep. This continued for well over one hundred years until in the seventies, when the Greek community in Istanbul had dwindled to five thousand people. The last evangelicals, my sister Irene and her husband Thanasie, closed the chapel and relinquished the keys before they moved to Greece. During the last ten or twelve years before the closure of the church, my brother-in-law who had a prospering plastic business would invite any visiting guest to their home, which was not far from the chapel, for Sunday dinner. My mother delighted in preparing delicious meals for everyone who came to their home.

My brother-in-law

I must refer here to my brother-in-law Thanasie's business. He had been brought up in a Greek orphanage on the main island of the chain called Princess Islands on the Marmara Sea. He grew up very frugally. He had no money when he married my sister, but had an entrepreneurial spirit, typical of the Greek folks in Istanbul. The manufacture of plastic items was just being introduced to the country. He was among the very first who saw this as a favorable opening to business. He started making little plastic toys with a small, primitive machine in one room. He said he had bought it from a Jew. His business picked up very quickly. He took his brother Niko into the company, which came to be known as 'TANIK' business. (The 'TA' was for 'Tanash' and the 'NIK' of course, stood for Niko.) He bought a nice piece of land in Dolapdere on the hills of the Golden Horn and built a small factory with eleven apartments above. He and Irene, their children and our parents all lived together in the largest apartment. Mother had already sold our original house in Kuzgunjuk and put the money toward building this rather ostentatious factory-apartment complex. In spite of many disadvantages, such as frequent water and power cuts, the business steadily gained ground.

Aramaic Christian folks were leaving their homes in the southeast of the country due to insecurity and moving to Istanbul for employment and safe living quarters. From the very outset, my brother-in-law rented his apartments at a minimal price to these Aramaic folks, several of whom he employed in his factory. He also rented a few apartments out to missionaries. At the time – in the early sixties – Lila and I, with our Debbie and Heather, went to Istanbul in the summer and lived there in one of the apartments while I was involved in various aspects of the ministry. One of the initial undertakings was the production of the Turkish calendar, with a Gospel message for each day. My father, who had given up his work by then, was a very eager volunteer in this ministry. He would type all the messages, many times way into the night, and after the printing of the calendars, would dispatch them in cartons to those who would use them, both within Turkey and outside of the country. A few times he was summoned by the police and questioned why he was producing this Christian calendar. He would reply that there were Christian folks in Turkey and these people needed calendars. This beautiful calendar, mounted on a cardboard background with a colored picture actually cut from used Christmas cards sent by friends in the USA entered into many Muslim homes. Putting these calendars together was a joint effort of a group of neighbors.

Back to the building where Thanasie had his business... Many Aramaic folks, as soon as they arrived in Istanbul where they had no other contact, came straight to Thanasie's apartment building, known as 'TANIK APT.' This became a wonderful haven to these people who had been living in fear in Southeastern Turkey. They could now move around with neighbors and friends right within the building, so felt at home from the start. One of these Aramaic women had to go to the police to be registered. She was an uneducated woman, a true Christian. The police asked her where she lived and she replied, 'In Noah's Ark'. The police official was flabbergasted. He asked, "Where is Noah's Ark?" Without hesitation she replied, 'TANIK APT.' All these Christians had come for shelter to this building for a very minimal rent, and for some, employment. The place is still in the hearts of many of these dear people, who eventually made their way out of Turkey and now live in Germany, Netherlands, Belgium and Sweden.

I shall now return to the Swedish chapel. I am happy to say that today with the shift of populations there is a Scandinavian Lutheran community in Istanbul where regular Lutheran services are held in this historic chapel. As long as the Greeks had the chapel, the Gospel was preached every Sunday. Along with the regular members, many Greek Orthodox people attended the services, heard the Good News and some were converted. The church often opened its doors to visiting preachers from other countries who spoke through interpreters.

While still living in Kuzgunjuk my mother preferred to attend the small evangelical gathering in the chapel of the American Girls' Academy of Üsküdar, which was within walking distance from our home near the Fistikagaci (pine tree) stop of the tram route. There was a lone, impressive pine tree right at that spot. Every Sunday she and we three children would go to church at the Academy, a ten to fifteen minute walk, where the preaching was in Turkish. Various speakers would come to preach. My mother's favorite preacher was Vahram Tatikian who was a very likeable person and also a remarkable evangelist whose story I have written, entitled, "Will Shine like the Stars Forever." It can be found on our website: www.cosmades.org. Another person's preaching which was very effective was that

of Hagopos Karacochian, an Armenian businessman. At a time when women preachers were uncommon, we also had a woman preacher, Miss Meryam Hagopian, a teacher at the American Academy. She would preach once a month, her preaching being very typical of the Congregational tradition, i.e., without any emphasis on conversion. Once in a while we also heard Brother Artaki, who had experienced a wonderful entry into spiritual life through Vahram Tatikian and would preach with passion, but eventually he got involved in successful business and lost that original fire.

Further Reminiscences of the Bosphorus and Kuzgunjuk

I cannot forget my early years of childhood at the Greek school. As already mentioned, it was a small minority school, attracting pupils from the families who lived in Kuzgunjuk. There must have been approximately one hundred and fifty Greek families living along the Bosphorus or on the nearby hills. At the writing of this piece, A.D. 2008, it is doubtful whether there are more than five Greek families left in this area, and those who still live there are elderly. The school was closed long ago. The Greeks have kept the church open because of political considerations with their masters, the Turks. There was a very large Sephardic Jewish community in Kuzgunjuk who spoke a language deriving from Spanish which their ancestors brought from Hispanic Iberia during the reign of Queen Isabella. They had at least three synagogues in Kuzgunjuk. Before and during Rosh Hashanah or at the conclusion of Yom Kippur the sound of the *Shofar* (ram's horn trumpet) was carried by the wind up to the place we lived. The topography of the area resembles an immense amphitheater. This Jewish element has also disappeared. The historic Islamic way of populating a place with their own people is to subtly oblige the local minority folks to leave their locality making way for Muslims to move in and replace them. The beautiful multi-cultural Kuzgunjuk is now almost exclusively Turkish, most of whom have come from the Black Sea region of Pontus. They are known as 'Laz'. The origin of these people is Pontian Greek. Today they are among the most nationalistic Turks who are at war against the establishing of Christian witness in the region.

From the second floor of our school we could look right onto the Bosphorus, with its constant navigation: ferry-boats criss-crossing the Strait, commercial ships, sometimes touristic ocean liners carrying passengers to ports along the Black Sea and interestingly, Hungarian, Romanian and other river boats sailing down from the Danube. There were also barges carrying commercial items, pulled along by motor-boats whose quaint sound broke through the silence of the Bosphorus. It was a very common scene to see little boats loaded with fish, making their way to the *Balikhane* (fish market) of the city. This unique waterway abounded with fish. It was said that seventy-five different kinds of fish were known to live in, or pass through, the Bosphorus. Today, most of these have vanished because of over-fishing and heavy pollution. Fish in Istanbul was an enjoyable and reasonable meal. There were especially two kinds, similar to each other but different in size, known as *torik*: the large *bonito* (tuna) and the smaller *palamut*. They were referred to as 'poor people's lamb.' Nowadays, not even the rich can have feasts of this kind spread before them; such is the rarity of these once-abundant fish. Little did we appreciate their value at the time. A street vendor would come to the houses selling live fish, still swimming in the huge buckets hanging from the yoke over his shoulders.

Street vendors were, and still are, an attraction in Istanbul's neighborhoods. Our fish vendor was a short, poor, scruffy-looking drug addict, who was dubbed '*Mudur*', i.e., '*Director*'. He made the rounds in the whole neighborhood. My mother offered him a good price for his freshly-caught fish, so he would run over to our house first. He was always barefooted, shabbily-dressed, with a cigarette dangling between his lips. Mother used to talk to him about the evils of cocaine, but it didn't seem to make any impression on poor '*Mudur*'. In those days, there were no addicts among young people. The destructive poison was used here and there by addicts like '*Mudur*'. Today there is an alarming community of drug users among young people, some from other lands. All sorts of vendors used to walk through the streets, practically every day. We enjoyed fresh goods of every kind – milk, pastries, fish, hot drinks in winter months, *salep* (a drink made with dried tubers of certain orchids), and *boza* (made of slightly fermented millet). We knew every vendor, mainly recognizing him from his manner of hawking.



*Fresh palamut just caught at the edge of the Bosphorus
Hills in background are on the Asiatic side.*

During some winters, the *torik* created a spectacular scene by jumping out of the sea onto the land. When the weather was sleety the *torik* were hit by the sleet as they were swimming, and suddenly they panicked. In their desperation, with the freezing water in their gills, they went into a frenzy and threw themselves out of the water onto the shore. Whole shoals of *torik* were unwittingly committing suicide. It was a scene to behold. People ran to the seaside from every direction, collected as many as they could and started selling them on the spot for twenty-five kurush to less ingenious people than themselves. There was ample *torik* on every table, grilled over charcoal, fried, or baked in the oven surrounded by onions. Besides, there was more than adequate left over to make whole barrels of *lakerda*. To the ordinary reader, the word *lakerda* is totally unknown. The Greeks of Constantinople with their many specialties added this delicious salted uncooked *torik* which was preserved in barrels, to their menus. And they had enough *lakerda*, served as hors d'oeuvres, for months to come.

Talking about the Greek Constantinople food culture, I cannot refrain from mentioning the *chiroz*. This specialty was made of dried ‘*uskumru*,’ (mackerel). Fishermen first cleaned them and then hung them out to dry on racks in the sun along the Bosphorus. Eventually they would sell them to shops. Before serving, the dried fish were soaked in vinegar. Then olive oil was added, after which the platter of these fish was garnished with olives, fresh parsley and dill. These hors d’oeuvres were required delicacies on the table when one had guests. Fish for the Greeks were not merely a food item, but were used to make such delectable dishes. These pleasant appetizers were particular to the Greeks, Italians, Maltese and a few other ethnic groups living in Constantinople. Muslims were not acquainted with these special dishes. They generally had their own cuisine, which was likewise enjoyable. The European side of the Bosphorus was replete with many well-known Greek restaurants where the best fish and other dishes were attractively served, drawing people from all parts of the city. Our particular favorite was ‘The Garage’, an unlikely name for an exquisite eating place.

Another exciting feature I recall from the old Bosphorus were the harsh winters – prior to global warming (a term unheard of at the time) – which necessitated the closing of schools whenever the snow was heavy. Many people walked to the seashore to look at huge chunks of ice floating down from the Black Sea. Originally these masses of ice were emptied from rivers flowing into the sea. They were eventually carried by the waves and channeled into the Bosphorus. Ships and boats had to be very careful to avoid being hit by these masses of ice. Those severe winters are long gone. I must mention here a common practice which of course I did not experience first-hand, but read about in books: During the times of the Ottoman reign when the Black Sea was for all practical purposes a ‘Turkish lake’, lumbermen in those regions threw their logs into the sea, relying on the currents to carry them all the way down the Bosphorus to Constantinople for the building of wooden mansions. A few of these have survived until the present time, designated as ‘buildings of antiquity’.

The shores of the Bosphorus were sparsely populated in my day. Beautiful mansions opulently embellished the gently curving coastline. They all had row-boat shelters in the water, built under their houses – a boat garage, so to speak. All the occupants of these mansions enjoyed going out in their boats during the summer, and especially by moonlight. In the fall the boats were hauled into their winter quarters. Turkish being profuse with suitable sayings has even got one for this: “*Tek kurekle mehtaba chikilmaz*” i.e., “You cannot have a moonlight boat-ride with a single oar.” Its meaning is, “You cannot embark into some enterprise without the necessary provision.”

Regular ferry schedules brought the boats all the way from the city to the head of the Bosphorus, where it opened to the Black Sea. People who lived along the Bosphorus always carried a current boat schedule in their pockets to check boat times. My father was an example of this. Every season a new boat schedule would be issued. At that time, bridges spanning the Strait could not even be imagined as a remote fantasy. But it did not take long for times to change. Today the European and Asiatic sides of the Bosphorus are spanned by two suspension bridges. A tunnel under the Bosphorus is in the process of being dug. Boat rides up and down the Bosphorus were terminated long ago. We used to enjoy our rides with special student rates and travel to any place either on the Asiatic or European side. Towns

on the Asiatic side were undeveloped and quaint. They had an air of Asia, whereas those on the European side kept up with the times. Forests bedecked the slopes on both sides. Various embassies in the land had their summer quarters on the European shore. Among these, the German and Russian embassies were very prominent. It would be an injustice not to mention the old palaces on both sides.

These remind students of history how the opulent, pleasure-prone Ottoman emperors, simultaneously caliphs of Islam (which office actually took precedence over that of emperor), always chose the very best life-style for themselves and their concubines. Cost didn't enter into consideration. And who cared about the suffering and oppressed poor! The most ostentatious of the palaces is the *Dolmabahche Sarayi* right on the waters of the European side. It houses magnificent treasures and old artifacts, the like of which cannot be found anywhere else. These were the legacy of the Ottoman emperors. Nobody lives in any of these palaces now. The last occupant of Dolmabahche Palace was Kemal Ataturk, who died there on November 10, 1938.

At this point, parenthetically I recall a memory of our harsh winters. We had a Greek neighbor, who lived across the field from our house – there were no streets or sidewalks in those days. Prodomos, known to everyone as 'Bobo', was a much-loved young man in the community, including by the many ladies who likewise found him lovable, and he them! He was always ready to come to the aid of anyone in the neighborhood. One winter, when the snow towered above human height people could not walk from place to place. Bobo took the initiative to dig out a handy tunnel, starting at his house, and everyone could walk through conveniently. His effort was widely appreciated. When I remember those harsh winters, I cannot fathom the immense change that has taken place in climatic conditions. Global warming has its effect everywhere. Bobo later married Christina, who was a beautiful young woman and an extraordinary cook. Their son Lazarus is one of the foremost meat and sausage dealers in Istanbul today. He and his brother are among the few Greeks who chose to remain in Istanbul. Lazarus is the right-hand man of the Greek Patriarchate. Also, he is the only sausage-maker with official license issued by the city to butcher pigs in the general slaughter house. He provides the whole city with pork and sausage, to the taste of a vast number of people, among them undoubtedly many Muslims.

The Winds of Istanbul

One can hardly reiterate his personal experiences in Istanbul without making reference to its weather. Istanbul is a city enveloped by the four, one can say, even the eight known winds. The Strait taking its course between the shores of the two continents is much affected by the weather; so is the entire city. The northern breezes blowing down from the Black Sea in summer are a welcome refresher. These are called *yaz poyrazi* (summer's northern winds). On the other hand, the northeastern wind coming down from the Black Sea in winter, which is called '*kish poyrazi*' (winter's northern winds) can bring shivers to the bones. The name '*poyraz*' derives from the Greek '*vorias*', which means 'northern wind'. This sometimes turns into unimaginable storms bringing havoc to ships in the Black Sea. It produces extremely cold weather and if it ends up in snowfall, it paralyzes the traffic throughout the city. However, it is appreciated by those who enjoy fresh air in what is now a polluted city.

The other well-known wind is known as '*lodos*' which blows from the south or southwest. Again, it is a word derived from Greek with a degree of transmutation. The Greek word is *notias*, meaning 'southern wind'. Many people traveling by boat to the European side of the city encounter great hardship when the *lodos* hits hard, as it affects traffic on the lower parts of the Bosphorus. Ships are lifted up and plunked down with the force of huge waves. People suffer with seasickness, regurgitating wherever they find a convenient spot. The wind lashes the shores with an immense onslaught of water. The *lodos* even brings an apparent somnolence on people's behavior, curtailing the zest for work. It is said that the judges in court cannot make clear decisions when this wind is blowing. While *kish poyrazi* is often appreciated for clearing pollution in the air, bringing fish down the Bosphorus and often rain, the dry *lodos* does not bring any benefit. Turks also call it *bozyel*, i.e., 'ash-grey wind' or *akyel*, i.e., 'white wind'. They even have a saying, *lodosta baliga chikilmaz* i.e., "you cannot go out to fish when the *lodos* is blowing." Its connotation is, "Don't attempt to do anything at an inopportune time." *Lodos* usually hits the city in the fall. At this time people avoid eating fish because of their languid appearance. When the *lodos* brings rain, suddenly the weather turns into *poyraz* and everybody heaves a deep sigh of relief, including the fish.

Another unpleasant phenomenon is when morning fog descends on sea and land. Navigation on the Bosphorus comes to a standstill, as no captain would dare to sail across the foggy sea. At *Ahirkapi* on the Marmara, ('horse gate' -- given this name because the palace's horses were kept in stables in this place) there was a very loud foghorn which could be heard in many parts of the city. It warned ships and small boats not to venture out. At a time when there were no bridges, people on the Asiatic side were delayed in going to work or school. Sometimes it was noon before we could cross the sea and start our day's activities. Today's commuters enjoying the convenience of the bridges never lived through this annoyance. Older folks experiencing the inconveniences in today's metropolis of well over fifteen million nostalgically reminisce about those minor aggravations at a time when the city was less than a million. Brumous weather conditions were usually common during fall or early spring. When boats dared to launch out anyway, carrying their overloaded human cargo, there could have been trouble. But somehow they always seemed to make it to the city.

Dolphins appear in the fall. They love to come alongside the bow of the ship, literally racing with it. For us young people it was thrilling to stand right on the very tip of the bow and watch the enthralling contest. Like all other sea creatures these beautiful dolphins are also dwindling in number. Pollution in the Marmara Sea is so intense that pictures taken from satellites show a thick layer of sludge at the bottom. Fish, and even humans, find that swimming in the Marmara is no longer a pleasant experience.

The Republic of Turkey

At the time of my birth, April 29, 1924, the cruel and aggressive Ottoman Empire had just demised after seven hundred long years of conquering and ruling. Exactly six months before my birth on October 29, 1923, the founder of modern Turkey, Kemal Ataturk, converted the country into a republic with a new constitution, declaring himself president. The new country could justly be called his brainchild.

He passionately hated the Ottoman dynasty and its sharia-based governmental system. During WWI he had been promoted to the rank of general in the Ottoman army and had participated in many battles. But his goal was to undo this decadent empire. He equally disliked the religion of Islam, even though he conveniently utilized religious leaders' assistance during the war against the Greek army in Anatolia (1919-1922). The Greek advance was halted and the establishing of a new Turkey began. Atatürk threw all the members of the royal dynasty out of the country. Along with them in March 1924 the religious headship (Caliphate) of the Ottoman Empire was abolished in favor of a laic state. The institution of the sultanate which simultaneously held the office of the caliphate over the centuries suddenly became a historic antiquity. During the entire austere rule of the caliphate the Porte was in charge of all Islamic affairs throughout the world with Muslims everywhere presumed to be subject to it.

Atatürk transferred the capital of the new country from Constantinople to Ankara (Ancyra). This sleepy Anatolian city, although of historic importance, did not challenge Atatürk to make it his home. He spent most of his time in the Dolmabahçe Palace, where he loved to entertain his guests. This ostentatious palace at the waters of the Bosphorus was more-or-less his permanent home. During the summer months he moved back and forth to his residence, built on stilts, at the seaside in Florya on the Marmara Sea. The Dolmabahçe Palace looks over at Üsküdar (Scoutari) on the Asiatic side. The Byzantines referred to Scoutari as *Chrisoupolis* (Golden City) because at sunset from the European side one could see the rays of the setting sun reflected in all the windows, glistening like gold. This was a beautiful scene to behold. Next to Chrisoupolis on the Marmara Sea (Propontis) is Kadıköy, (historic Chalcedon), another city which enchants the viewer from across the waters on the European side. To the student, the Council of Chalcedon in 451 calls forth memories about crucial decisions in church history and their aftermath.

Back to Atatürk — yachts carrying potentates dropped anchor in front of the palace during their visits. One particular guest about whom my memory is very vivid was King Edward VIII, who had just ascended to the throne of the British Empire. In the summer of 1936 during his Mediterranean cruise his yacht called *Nahlin* sailed into the waters of the Bosphorus. Naturally, Wallace Simpson was with him. The press had strict orders not to say anything about 'Madame Simpson' who was accompanying the soon-to-abdicate king. It was quite a sensation to have the king and the 'woman he loved' in Istanbul.

Another potentate whose visit I witnessed was the then Shah of Iran, Reza Shah Pahlavi who reigned from 1925-1941. Atatürk never traveled to another country, but he loved to lavishly entertain important personalities, generally in Istanbul. The shah's visit in 1934 was a grandiose state occasion. He was father of the late shah, who was thrown out by Khomeini who in turn converted Iran into an Islamic sharia republic. The shah, like his close friend Atatürk, had implemented reforms beyond the capabilities of his country to absorb them. The wrath of the mullahs was festering throughout the decades of his and his son's reigns, which at last burst in 1979. In Turkey today there is a determined element cherishing the introduction of Islam as the religion of the state. This highly disturbs the secular section.

Departing from Seven Hundred Years' Norm

Other than the Shah and the Afghan king Amanoullah Khan, no leader of any Islamic country was entertained by Ataturk. Of course, in those days there weren't many such countries! Islam was very dormant at that time. During recent years, Peter Scholl-Latour, a distinguished German historian-analyst, has mentioned some of Ataturk's unguarded remarks about the prophet of Islam. Ataturk is given credit for colossal accomplishments at the inception of modern Turkey. Every historian records the profusion of radical reforms initiated and implemented by the new leader of the country. It should not escape anyone's attention that most of his reforms targeted the religious establishment which had been in control of his country for many centuries. In the name of the prophet and Allah the Ottoman emperors threatened Vienna twice (1529 and 1683). Their claim was that they had a mandate from Allah to conquer (*fateh*) and govern vast territories in accordance with the dictates of the Quran. The religions outside Islam are wrong and must be brought under the sway of Allah's rule. This was carried on under the banner of *jihad*, admixed with the Islamic concepts of *gazavat*, *shahadat*, *tefrikat*. The conquest pursued by the Ottomans on land and sea touched the whole of the Mediterranean world. Ataturk assumed power at the demise of this decadent empire. He single-handedly implemented his reforms practically all of which ran against the grain of Ottoman sovereignty inspired by Islam.

At the founding of the new republic Ataturk established the parliament which in actuality was hand-picked and created by his own one-party government. Some called him a 'benevolent dictator', but he was also a harsh ruler. He mercilessly smashed all religious opposition to the new republic which emanated from various sections committed to Islam. All religious institutions were mercilessly abolished.

During those years there was also a Kurdish revolt – the first of its kind. It was inspired by Islamic principles and came to be known as the 'Sheikh Said Revolt'. The sheikh's headquarters were in Dersim. Ataturk suppressed the Kurds' ambition to obtain their own territory with a religiously-oriented self-government. This revolt was mercilessly crushed. In the end, Kurdish villagers and townspeople throughout the east and southeast of the country were evicted from their ancestral places and resettled all across Anatolia. But this could not stop Kurdish nationalistic aspirations, as resettled Kurds continued to speak their own language and follow their traditional culture. Kurdish restiveness was to re-emerge in the latter years of the twentieth century and it still continues to be one of Turkey's major problems.

Ataturk removed all trace of sharia rule in favor of a western constitution, mainly copied from the Swiss legal code. Already mentioned, in one stroke he abolished the caliphdom and expelled from the country all members of the Ottoman dynasty. The office of caliphdom was acquired during the conquests of one of the earlier emperors, Sultan Selim II (1512-1520). His harsh conquests (*fateh*) touched the Persian territories and extended to Egypt from where he acquired the title '*caliph*'. He used draconian measures to deal with conquered lands. For a while, he even contemplated forcing the entire Greek population to convert to Islam. He was strenuously prevented from this insensate plot by the sheik of Islamism, a member of his own government.

Ataturk's reforms struck at the very heart of religion and culture. One of his most astounding changes touched women's rights. He took the traditional Islamic dress and headgear off of the modernized women. This implementation went over quite well in the main cities but hardly touched the back country. He gave women the right to vote, to run for parliament, hold professorships, etc. Men could no longer divorce their wives by '*talak*', simply repeating three times, "I divorce you." He outlawed polygamy. Regarding his own personal life, he divorced his wife in favor of enjoying casual relationships.

He adopted the western calendar and discarded the Islamic *Ano Hejrah* designation of the epoch. He abolished all Islamic institutions bound to sharia, such as the *madrasah* and religious orders and titles, such as 'sheik'. He even prohibited the *Mevlevi* celebration in Konya with their Sufi practices of Islam. This, however, has been thoroughly revived in recent decades. All sharia dictates were expunged from the courts. Judges, lawyers, clerks, etc., had to be law school graduates. He abolished the oath-taking which was done by laying a hand on the Quran. Instead, he innovated the formula, "I swear on my honor and dignity." Today's religionists would like very much to strike out this practice which is valid until now. Several of Ataturk's implementations could not be rejected, even though some have been discarded over the years.

From its inception the Ottoman language used Arabic script. Ataturk could not stand anything smacking of Arabicism. He went around from place to place, gathering people in city and town squares. In view of everyone he would write on a large blackboard Turkish in Latin characters, and say "From now on, we will use these letters." So it was 'out with Arabic' and 'in with Latin'. To implement this drastic reform, he initiated 'country schools' where people were obliged to attend in the evenings to learn the new alphabet and how to read and write. Both my parents having had their training in mission schools were accustomed to this alphabet and after one or two evening lessons they were sent off. The very year I started elementary school in Kuzgunjuk, the educational system was converted to using Latin script. I regret having missed the opportunity to learn Arabic script.

A harder implementation than this was the makeup of the very language. Ottoman Turkish used until then was heavily loaded with Arabic and Persian phraseology. Words of Turkish origin were few and far between. Also there were certain Greek words which had been integrated. The language renewal was certainly one of the most radical of all Ataturk's reforms. The new language came to be known as *Yeni Turkche* (new Turkish). New Turkish words had to be invented to replace most of the Arabic and Persian ones. Linguistic evolution is an ongoing process in Turkey.

Ataturk's reforms very boldly touched both headgear and dress code. With an iron hand he enacted laws designating what could be worn and what couldn't. Both men's and women's attire had to be adapted to western style. This reform however never impacted the back country. Nevertheless, it was thorough in the cities. All religious attire displayed outside places of worship was prohibited, whether for imams, priests or rabbis. Religious people resorted to wearing black suits and hats. Until then, it was general for men to wear the *fez* (a brimless cone-shaped, flat-crowned hat usually with a tassel, made of red felt). Ataturk wanted to change this. One day he called a public gathering in the city of Kastamonu, north of Ankara, carrying a western-style men's hat in a bag. He made a rousing talk and then took

the hat out of the bag. He put it on his head and said, "This is called '*shapka*' (hat)." This reform took root in the cities, but once again, the men in the back country never donned '*shapkas*'. Instead they wore ordinary caps with visors, their practice until today.

An extreme change pulled from Ataturk's bag of reforms was the conversion of the *ezan* (call to prayer five times a day) from Arabic to a superficial wording in Turkish, from which the name of the prophet of Islam was excluded. Ataturk's Turkey was the only country in the history of Islam that dared to change the call to prayer from Arabic to another language. Even Allah's name was changed to '*Tanri*', the pre-Islamic Turkish word for 'God'. It is widely used to this day, which infuriates the religious establishment. Christian scriptures and other publications use the name '*Tanri*'. What Ataturk did was a very strange way to extend the call to prayer, but it was the unchallengeable law of the time. Lord Kinross who wrote the most accurate biography of Ataturk made a remarkable observation in his book: "For Kemal, Islam and civilization were a contradiction in terms. 'If only,' he once said of the Turks, with a flash of cynical insight, 'we could make them Christians!' His was not to be the reformed Islamic state for which the faithful were waiting: it was to be a strictly lay state, with a centralized government as strong as the Sultan's, backed by the army and run by his own intellectual bureaucracy."

The religionists were particularly up in arms about the adoption of the appellation of '*Tanri*'. Today, the name 'Allah' is once again being used universally. It is anathema to the traditionalists to use the cognomen '*Tanri*'. One of the most radical prohibitions that Ataturk implemented was the annual '*hajj*', i.e., pilgrimage to Mecca. Until the end of WWI, the Ottoman Empire was custodian of Mecca. Now the Turks suddenly found themselves in the quandary of not even being able to travel to Mecca. Naturally, the practice was not entirely stopped. Many Turks continued to make the '*hajj*'. However, this was done illegally.

Following the death of Ataturk the country gradually started drifting back into the re-establishment of the former practices. The abandonment of the *ezan* in Turkish in favor of the Arabic *ezan* found its golden opportunity. It had been a burning pursuance of the religionist segment. I vividly recall the first time when the *ezan* in Arabic was sounded from the minarets of the huge '*Yeni Jami*' (New Mosque) in Eminonu. It was February 1950. I happened to be crossing the Galata Bridge when I saw huge crowds lifting the coffin of Marshal Fevzi Chakmak. They carried it from one end of the bridge to the other, while loudly chanting prayers in Arabic. Marshal Chakmak, once Ataturk's trusted military leader, had aspired to return to Islamic practice in the latter days of his life. The religionists embraced him with great enthusiasm and the occasion of his death was a unique opportunity to demonstrate their resolution. When the crowd reached the center of the bridge, suddenly the *ezan* in Arabic loudly burst forth from every minaret: "*Allah-u-ekber!*" With a tumultuous demonstration this very basic reform of Ataturk was trodden under foot in an instant. Actually, according to the law, the authorities could have suppressed this exuberance. However, they wisely abstained from interference which could have led to bloodshed. Ever since that day with ever-growing intensity, the *ezan* in Turkey is chanted in Arabic. Quite a number of Ataturk's reforms, like this one, have landed in the graveyard.

Another striking decision of Atatürk was to institute the 'Surname Act'. He himself took the name Atatürk, which means 'Father of the Turks'. He compelled all Turks to adopt a surname, which until then they did not have. Turks went by their father's name, e.g. 'Osmanoglu Ali', which interpreted means, 'Ali, Osman's son'. Important people bore the titles *zadé*, *agha*, *sheik*, and *seyit*, which implied some noble origin. Atatürk abolished all these. By obliging everyone to choose a surname for identification he introduced the concept of equality among all Turks. Suddenly every Turk was running to the Bureau of Registry, picking a surname for himself. And what names they chose on the spur of the moment! Some of them were amusing, such as 'Savash' (war), 'Kilich' (sword), 'Ok' (arrow), 'Zafer' (victory), 'Yildirim' (lightning), 'Bulut' (cloud), 'Tufan' (typhoon), 'Barish' (peace), 'Jengiz' (man of war), 'Ozturk' (essential Turk), 'Dagh' (mountain), 'Bayir' (downhill), etc. Many adopted animal names such as 'Aslan' (lion), 'Kaplan' (tiger), 'Kurt' (wolf), 'Akkush' (white bird) and the list goes on.

At this point I will mention a saintly brother who was a bit eccentric, Gregorios Moschos, a diligent Bible colporteur. As mentioned above, Atatürk required everyone to choose a surname and have it entered in the national registry. This law applied mainly to ethnic Turks who were generally referred to by their father's name. Members of the non-Muslim minorities did not need to choose a surname because traditionally they had one. For example, Gregorios' surname was Moschos. When the law was announced Brother Moschos, identity card in hand, hurried along to the registration office. Short in stature, hunchbacked, his round bearded face commanding respect, he stationed himself before the official who asked, "What do you want, sir?" "Young man, I've come to take a surname." "But you already have a surname!" "That doesn't matter. I want to take a new one." "Well, let's see. What name have you chosen?" Beaming with the joy of his Savior, he replied, "*Bekleyen*" (the Turkish word for 'waiting one'). "Who are you waiting for?" "I'm waiting for Jesus Christ who is going to come from heaven!" Everyone in the registration office pricked up their ears when they heard the strange request. They listened to this 'waiting' brother with curiosity to find out how this 'coming' of the awaited one would happen. From that day on, his newly registered name, Gregorios Moschos Bekleyen, proved to be an effective starting-point for a witness about Jesus Christ to people he met.

There were countless other reforms decreed by Turkey's new leader. It is not easy to recount all of them. He was out to undo the whole fabric of the Islamic-oriented Ottoman rule. When Atatürk abolished the dynasty and caliphdom, the palaces were full of Africans serving the royalty and their many women — wives and concubines in their crowded harem. These were slaves brought from Africa in their youth, stolen or bought. They underwent an excruciating operation to make them eunuchs ('*koese*' in Turkish). At the abolishing of the dynasty all these men found themselves in the miserable state of non-existence. Members of the royalty were banished from the country, leaving these poor people behind. I remember seeing them walking around on the streets. Men on whom age had taken its toll were without whiskers and spoke with very weak, effeminate voices. They were happy when as a child I stopped and greeted them, exchanging a few nice words. As a pension they were given a monthly stipend from the government and left to their pitiful destiny. They were going around in miserable clothes. Naturally, they had no family. They completely vanished from the scene within ten or fifteen years.

My World View

During the eighty-plus years of my life, I have continuously witnessed wars and lived in an atmosphere of wars. In Turkey I was witness to the Kurdish uprising in the east, which was suppressed by Ataturk. On the international scene Benito Mussolini (1883-1945) was in power with his Fascist form of government in Italy. He had great aspirations to revitalize the old Roman Empire under his dictatorial rule. He aspired greatness, the achievement of which he pursued by war. At the time, Italy was already in control of Somalia and Eritrea. Mussolini had his eye on the ancient kingdom of Abyssinia (Ethiopia). The frontier incidents between the colonial forces of Mussolini and the Ethiopian army culminated in the declaration of war in December 1934. At that time the League of Nations with headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland, was supposed to mediate in conflicts. However, this organization showed its ineptness and in May 1936, Addis Ababa, the capital, was captured. The Italians used all their mechanized forces and poison gas. This war disturbed me greatly, as it did freedom-loving people everywhere. The capture of Abyssinia by the Fascist forces was a prelude to the Nazi expansion.

Trouble was brewing elsewhere. The Spanish Civil War began with a revolt of military commanders in Spanish Morocco in July 1936. The Spanish insurgents were led by a general who was killed two months later, and shrewd Generalissimo Franco took over the helm and was proclaimed Chief of the Spanish State. I was already introduced to international politics, and as a young boy keenly followed the Abyssinian War and immediately after, the war in Spain. The League of Nations which had done nothing to come to the aid of Emperor Haile Selassie, this time displayed its ineffectiveness in the war which had been started by Fascists to take over Spain. Naturally, Hitler, who had risen to power in Germany through parliamentary elections and then through a shrewd parliamentary coup, conveniently advanced himself to indisputable dictator. He speedily jumped onto Mussolini's bandwagon. Mussolini had sent more than fifty thousand 'volunteers' to Spain. Next, the German 'Luftwaffe' joined the war by its merciless bombing of important cities held by the Republican government. Especially the bombing of Guernica made history, particularly through Picasso's famous painting of the sad event. The two major forces of the time, England and France, declared a 'non-intervention' policy which allowed the Fascist forces to take over Spain. The two countries lived to regret their gullibility in letting Franco capture the whole of Spain. Franco's victory greased the war machine of Hitler and Mussolini. The civil war ended in March 1939. Some three-quarters of a million lives perished in this war.

It should be mentioned here that the only super power of our time, i.e., the U.S.A., was a second-rate country then, more-or-less sticking to her isolationist policy. I was growing up in a world where hatred, strife and bloody wars were in front of me daily. Newspapers were the only medium to which we had access. It was too early to talk about radio. In fact, we used kerosene lamps to light our house until electricity was brought into our neighborhood a few years later, at the end of the thirties. What a delight was ours to have electric lights! I will deviate for a moment and mention that only one room of our house in Kuzgunjuk was heated during winter by a wood stove. We took turns huddling around the ceramic stove to enjoy as much heat as possible. I was daily devouring the distasteful news of our turbulent world between the two major world wars.

As Winston Churchill later stated in his memoirs, those were the days of ingathering clouds. While the western countries displayed total indifference toward the imminent crisis, Stalin was watching Hitler and Mussolini drill for the major war. But he had other intentions: his aim was to capture Spain in order to establish his Marxist brand of rule. Being far away he did not succeed, but he came out with one major gain. He manipulated the Republican government, which by the end of the war was practically controlled by Marxists, to dispatch Spain's rich gold reserve to the Soviet Union. The Soviets conveniently sent a large ship to Barcelona onto which the huge and valuable commodity was loaded. Neither France nor England was alert enough to outsmart Stalin and have the gold sent to one of their countries. All efforts of subsequent Spanish governments to reclaim this great treasure failed.

Intellectuals, writers, artists and all sorts of freedom-respecting people detested Fascism. They were more aware than the two major governments of what lay ahead. One of my exciting observations was to see the formation of the International Brigade to fight against Franco in order to salvage democracy in Spain. Men everywhere with love for democracy lavished their high admiration on the International Brigade. It was a rag-tag cluster of well-intentioned highly motivated individuals, without any fighting experience. A number of them perished under Hitler's sophisticated and constantly-improved weaponry. As a young boy I thought to myself, "If only I were five years older, I would rush to Spain and join the International Brigade." My only wish was that the Republican government would succeed, which was not to be.

Mussolini had marked a loathsome victory in Abyssinia. Then Hitler scored his proxy victory at the end of March 1939, when Franco took over Spain. Exactly five months later Hitler would march into Poland, already having achieved this victory. During the Spanish Civil War, with my small mind I could detect that some day there was going to be an all-European war. The western countries had already let Hitler have his 'Anschluss' in Austria. Then in two installments, they allowed him to gobble up democratic Czechoslovakia. I was asking myself in disgust: "Why don't England and France stand up to Hitler instead of following their notorious appeasement policy?" Other boys my age weren't thinking about these disquieting happenings. But having already cultivated a mind for politics, these developments were my daily diet. My father's interest in politics was not very keen. But Dayi was 'all politics'. He would daily read the Turkish newspaper and discuss politics with me. We were both ardent anti-Nazis. Interestingly, he had considerable experience with the Germans. During WWI he was in the Ottoman army and was sent to the Mesopotamian front to defend the decadent Ottoman Empire. He related to me his experiences under the German general, Rüdiger von der Goltz pasha (the Ottomans gave the Germans their own titles, hence the 'pasha') who commanded the German and Austro-Hungarian forces against the British in Mesopotamia.

While fighting against the British, Dayi and many of his fellow-soldiers wanted the Central Alliance, made up of Germany, Austro-Hungarian Empire, Bulgaria and the Ottomans, to be defeated. This ultimately happened, but at the cost of horrendous bloodshed and the Armenian massacre by the Ottomans in Anatolia. He told me that the Germans actually gave ignoble encouragement to their allies, the Ottomans, for the massacre of the Armenians.

In twenty-one years' time, after World War I ended with defeat, the Germans were to strike again, this time under the diabolical Hitler. I was fifteen years of age. On September 1, 1939, I was lying in bed sick with paratyphoid fever, which was an epidemic at the time. Mother called our family doctor, Hovannes Kaprielian, to come to see me. He came with the news that World War II had begun with Germany's attack on Poland. Once again, my heart grieved. Why couldn't the democratic countries have prevented this new outbreak of war? It was to bring immense calamity on tens of millions in Europe and the rest of the world.

Religion in our Home

Already mentioned, I am third-generation Protestant Congregationalist. What a pity that I did not experience the joyful conversion to Christ while young! This delightful experience was to wait until I was twenty-five, after having been engaged in sin and mischief. In old New England I would probably have been designated as a 'half-way covenant' person. I invite the reader to look into some religious dictionary of America and find the implication of this term. My father did not have his encounter with the Lord Jesus Christ, as he told it, until a visit by Dr. J. Oswald Smith, who preached at the Bible House Church in 1936. Dr. Smith's theme was 'Supreme Love for Christ'. His translator was Miss Meryem Hagopian. I was in church that day. I even remember the points he made in his message, but I had to wait another thirteen years to have my own encounter with the Savior through another Dr. Smith. My mother could not recount a conversion experience.

My parents did not have a combined church life. Father went to the Greek Evangelical Church in Pera (Pera is the historic Greek section of the new city, today's Beyoglu) and mother to the American Chapel in *Fistikagaji*, within walking distance from our home. I liked to attend the Immanuel Bible House Church in Eminonu where the preaching was in Turkish. Once in a while I would visit the Dutch Chapel, situated within the Dutch Consulate grounds in Pera. The services were in English in this church consisting of people mostly from the upper crust. The ministers were largely of the liberal tradition. I liked to meet people from other lands and practice my English. However, as I remember, there was not much substance in the messages. Interestingly, in recent years this church has been taken over by Christian workers from various countries and the preaching has become pretty much evangelical. However, the old select element has gone. It has been replaced mostly by refugees, even some questionable characters, who have found their way from several continents to Istanbul seeking to move on to more affluent lands in the west. But in my youth, I often neglected church. My interest was football; not playing, but attending the matches which were held every Sunday.

The pastor of the Greek Evangelical Church was Evangelos Panousis, a good upright man, but with no emphasis on personal conversion in his preaching. Amazingly, the small Swedish chapel was full of genuinely converted people, as well as visitors from the Greek Orthodox community. Mr. Panousis was an eloquent preacher who often embellished his sermons with his own poetry. In his preaching he did not spare the Greek Orthodox Church from caustic criticism, a practice entirely abandoned in our day.

Yiayia Despina was a woman who strictly adhered to her Puritan principles which she had received from the Congregational missionaries in Talas. She diligently tried

to impress these on the rest of us. She carefully observed the Lord's Day and was exact in all her dealings. This remains fresh in my mind. She read her worn-out *Karamanlithiko* Turkish Bible. The Bible meant everything to her. She also read 'Pilgrim's Progress' in the same language. I already mentioned 'Dayi'. He had gradually lost his interest in religion, but he could not forget the Puritan ethics which he had received in his youth in Talas. He was a straight person, too. He was a faithful uncle to all of us. His memory ever lingers in my mind, notwithstanding the numerous spankings I endured at his disciplining hands. I hardly remember any spanking from my father. My discipline was Dayi's domain, and I certainly needed it. Too many of my offenses escaped Dayi's attention. A wrong act on my part would invite my mother's or Yiayia's reminder, "*Dayi'ya soyleyejegin*" i.e., "I will tell Dayi." This warning was sufficient. Dayi was an excellent custodian of rectification and justice in our home. My sisters did not need much discipline; they were both refined, compliant girls. I still regret that these intelligent girls did not continue education after elementary school. Our dear mother found school for girls unnecessary and sent them first to the neighborhood seamstresses as apprentices and eventually to dress-making school. They became skillful dress-makers and Dorothea a talented designer, but were short-changed from getting a good all-around education. I love both my sisters and until now we have a good relationship.

At this point I must mention that mother did not care very much for deep spiritual matters. Gregorios Moschos used to visit Christian homes, rendering some sort of pastoral service. His conversation always centered on spiritual matters. For my mother, this was a little much. One day she apparently felt uncomfortable and said to Moschos, "You may leave my house and not visit us again." This constituted a sad impression in my young mind. I am now thinking how different my youth could have been and what a direction I could have taken if mother had asked Moschos to drop in as often as he could and catechize us in the deep truths of God. But this was not to be. Years went by. My dear sister Irini married Thanasie Mungrides, a convert from the Greek Orthodox faith, and she inherited an unsaved mother-in-law, *Kyria Evyenia*, (Mrs. Eugenia), besides having her own mother. Mrs. Evyenia was steeped in the dark world of her religion, without the knowledge of Jesus Christ. Irini made her a project for salvation and led her to the Lord before she died. At the time of her marriage, Irini also inherited a baby daughter, Andriana, whose mother bearing the same name, had died in childbirth. Thanasie was left a young widower with this baby. My sister showered more love on the adopted daughter than she would have had she been her own biological child.

My wife Lila had heard stories about my family background from the time we were married. Among these was the story of mother's dislike of Moschos. She spoke to my mother about the past wrong when she had chased Moschos out of the house. Lila induced her to confession and repentance about her treatment of Moschos. Through Irini's earnest efforts, mother finally confessed Christ as her Savior before she died at the age of ninety-one in Athens. Father died in August 1969 at Thanasie's house in Halki, one of the Princess Islands. He was buried in the family plot at the Protestant cemetery in Feriköy, Istanbul. My sister Dorothea was visiting from the USA with her husband and their two sons at the time.

Mother was trained at the Gedikpasha Mission School, then for a short time at the American Academy in Bursa. But the matter of justification by faith had ceased to be emphasized in these schools. I can now say that we were all under the aegis of

Moschos' intercessions, which brought its fruit many years later. The salvation of Turks was his prime burden. At that time there were no more than five Turkish believers, and these, very timid. During the summer months, Moschos would retreat to the small woods on a hill in Kuzgunjuk, very near our house. With a heavy coat thrown over his aged body and a very heavy heart he persistently interceded all night to his Lord that many Turks' disposition would be kindled with faith in Jesus Christ. On summer mornings when the nightingales would begin singing in their sonorous choir, it was as if they were blending their 'amen' with Moschos' deep certitude of faith. Time went by, and today there are probably close to five thousand Turkish men and women who believe in Christ. Generally they are enduring false accusations, even persecution (*cf. James 5:16b*). Moschos believed that the Holy Spirit would move the Turks' hearts and save them. He prayed in faith and the Lord is answering his prayers even yet.

Turbulent War Years

During my childhood and adolescence the salient events of World War I, still widely discussed, occupied my mind. When I would listen to people relating the bloody occurrences and cruelties experienced during the war a deep revulsion sprung up within me. My uncle was an ardent newspaper reader. This was the only source of news to which we had access. As I accumulated information from the press my thoughts about the war were being formulated. The Turkish press was far from free. There was unofficial censorship. Every once in a while, some newspaper would suddenly be stopped from publication because it had stepped out of line. Dayi with his sharp evaluation of matters would try to decipher the events. He would interpret the actualities hidden between the lines and share the information with me. An intelligent reader of the newspaper could understand that certain items were left unreported. Radio entered our home in the early forties. Our world was suddenly transformed. We started following world events with keener interest. Domestic news was generally bland, the intention being not to expose sensitive matters. There was no element of excitement in these reports.

International news was presented more objectively. Through radio we had a more-or-less open window to the outside world. Up to Ataturk's death on November 10, 1938, all his speeches in various parts of the country were reported in full. If I were to summarize his general line, it would center on the statement, "We will modernize Turkey." Later I came to realize that his cryptic utterance had reference to Islam's resistance to modernity. Ataturk would not say, "We will westernize Turkey." He could have created some aversion among the people, so he employed the right terminology. It could be said of him that he had keen insight about the niceties of politics in his nation. At his death the Turkish nation wept. Following long years of silence Ismet Inonu appeared on the scene and was elected as the new president. The political tactics behind this development were subject to plenty of speculation. Ataturk's trusted Prime Minister, Jelal Bayar, immediately left the scene and retreated into oblivion. The new title given to Ataturk was *Ebedi Shef*, i.e., 'Eternal Chief' and Inonu started being called *Milli Shef*, which means 'National Chief'.

Once again war skirmishes were in evidence. The first war I encountered was the Kurdish rebellion of Sheik Said in the east. Information on this sensitive subject was very sparse and measured. There was no in-depth account of the uprising. Sheik Said was presented as a rebel with religious aspiration for leadership. The main

center of the Kurdish uprising was Dersim. The Turkish air force was participating in the battle. The war did not have a clearly-defined front as the rebellion had spread quite widely. There was much bloodshed. One of the pilots who flew a plane in that war was Atatürk's adopted daughter, Sabiha Gökçen. We later learned that this woman was an Armenian orphan adopted by Atatürk. Amazingly, the new airport opened a few years ago on the Asiatic side of Istanbul was named after her. Strange are the ironies of history. The Kurdish uprising of the thirties had a religious color. Present-day Kurdish restiveness bears the undertone of Marxism. Naturally, the extreme poverty and unemployment in the south-east of the country plays an important role in this.

Following the revolt of the early thirties, Kurdish people were transplanted to various parts of the country. It was anticipated that they would integrate with the local Turkish folks, speak Turkish and be Turkishized. But they stubbornly resisted the tenets of this policy. They tenaciously clung to their language and ethnic identity. The Kurds in our time who have had to abandon their destroyed villages and move to the major western cities are being integrated more effectively. They became refugees within their own country, but are retaining their ethnic identity by settling in sizeable pockets in the large cities. The unsolved Kurdish quandary is still very evident in the eastern provinces and a prime matter of concern for the Turkish government. Poverty and unemployment are clearly evident among them. At this writing, the common question within and outside Turkey is, "How is the government going to solve the Kurdish question and bring some sort of healing to this age-long wound?" The Prime Minister of the 2000's seems to be a very shrewd person. Will his calculating demeanor enable him to achieve a settlement to everyone's satisfaction?

The fast-rising hothead Hitler was making the daily news. He executed his vicious activities continuously and incisively. His Nazi party became the second largest party in the September 1930 democratically-held elections. On June 30, 1933, Hitler was appointed Chancellor, and eventually pushed the whole country to a one-party dictatorship. On the second of August 1934, Hitler was proclaimed 'Führer of the German Reich'. The haranguer's rise to absolute power appalled all those who could foresee the ominous turbulence ahead. At the time, the USA was more-or-less committed to isolationism. England and France opted for the road of appeasement and non-intervention, especially during the Spanish Civil War. Before Hitler, Benito Mussolini in Italy established his own dictatorship. He declared the Mediterranean as *mare nostrum*, i.e., 'our sea'. He was making one fiery speech after another with Hitler close at his heels. All we could hear and read was the incendiary speeches of the two aspirants of 'New Order for Europe'.

Soon Mussolini gave an ultimatum to Emperor Haile Selassie of Abyssinia, demanding his country. When the Abyssinians rejected the brassy request Mussolini marched into the land from Eritrea. The Abyssinians resisted, but under the rain of poisonous gas unloaded by the Italian air force, Addis Ababa surrendered on the 5th of May, 1936. The sounds of war in Europe were becoming more audible by the day.

Hitler owed much to his notorious non-aggression pact co-signed by Stalin in August 1939. This world-shocking event stunned Communists, Socialists and other liberals across Europe as Stalin entered into an unholy alliance with Hitler. The

pact gave Hitler the green light to launch World War II and conquer Poland, leaving half of it to Stalin's mercy. This demonstrated that dictators are not subject to any principle, except those serving their own vicious end. After Hitler conquered France and several other European countries, on June 22, 1941, he tore up the non-aggression pact he had signed with Stalin and tossed it into the waste basket. The German *Wehrmacht* stirred up by nationalistic marches attacked the Soviets. This conspiracy committed in the dark would eventually plunge both Germany and Russia into the abyss.

Turkey during World War II

President Ismet Inonu, elected to this position immediately following Ataturk's death, increasingly assumed the title of 'National Chief' in every sense of the word. After he dismissed Jelal Bayar from the premiership he appointed Dr. Refik Saydam to head the new government. This man, a medical doctor by profession, was a humane administrator. When he took over the helm of the country he made a cutting observation regarding the general situation. His saying passed into the annals of modern Turkey: "Our affairs are faulty from A to Z." One wonders what headway they have made in the ensuing seventy years. Today corruption is the number one problem of the country. Refik Saydam did not have much room to maneuver. The established mentality of government did not offer him the needed opportunity to amend the 'matters from A to Z'. He suddenly died in office, leaving his post in the hands of an austere nationalistic prime minister, Shukru Sarachoglu. It was clear in everyone's mind that he was Inonu's preferred man in government. Turkey's neutrality in the war was becoming a matter of international scrutiny.

Shukru Sarachoglu engineered Inonu's calculated position in the war. He did business, especially with the Germans who were hungry for raw materials for their war machine. Turkey's supplying steel to the Germans was one of the main anxieties of the allies. They protested to Turkey, but to no avail. The German war industry had an increasing demand for Turkey's raw materials. The Nazi armies were marching from victory to victory. After the fall of France and several other European lands only two free countries remained, Sweden and Switzerland, who managed to keep themselves from Hitler's rage. No country could resist the German *blitzkrieg*, the parachute jumpers and the U-boat attacks in the open seas. The war was raging in intensifying ferocity. The madman Hitler was sending his swastika-ornated forces from country to country, colonizing Europe. The air battle, lost by Hitler over Britain, became a saga.

The German armies with their well-known *blitzkrieg* tactic conquered city after city. However, they came short of reaching Moscow since the winter had come in force that year and halted the German march. In 1942 the Germans concentrated on attacking the southern flank of the Red Army. In November they reached Stalingrad. Hundreds of thousands of soldiers and civilians were butchered during this blood-drenched battle. Hitler's general staff aimed at capturing Stalingrad which would have opened the road to the whole petrol region of the Caucasus. Once again, a second harsh winter thwarted Hitler's fortunes. In Turkey we were discussing what would happen if Stalingrad fell to the Nazis and the *Wehrmacht* moved south reaching the Turkish border. The battle continued from street to street and from house to house. Stalin relentlessly sacrificed his people. Hitler also offered at the

Altar of Mars the youth of his woeful nation. The extraordinary battle fought by twenty-one German divisions failed to accomplish Hitler's dream. The back of the German army and the Third Reich was broken.

The three-month-long battle ended on the 31st of January, 1943, when ninety thousand German soldiers under the command of General Friedrich von Paulus surrendered. All these hapless soldiers, now prisoners, had to march unimaginable distances through snow and cold, to the inner parts of the Soviet Union. Most of them perished along the way. The rest remained prisoners of the Soviets for at least ten years. Hitler's insane adventure was wiping out a whole generation of his own people. In the meantime, his propaganda minister, Joseph Goebbels, was throwing inflammatory speeches, promising the German nation miracle weapons which would alter the fate of the war. He was inciting the Germans to hate the enemy. Those miracle weapons never materialized. In the meantime, German cities were turned to rubble by merciless allied bombings. This ferocious conflict could be considered one of the cruelest wars in mankind's tortuous history.

In July 1943, prior to the occupation of any German territory, some German generals and officers attempted a well-planned assassination right at Hitler's headquarters. Through sheer misfortune, Hitler was spared by moving a few feet away at the crucial moment of the explosion from a bomb carried in an attaché case. Hitler and his cohorts attributed their escape to the protection of their God. The dictator mercilessly executed all participants in this attempt. The already-lost war was extended by almost two more years until the Führer perished in his bunker in Berlin alongside his new bride, Eva Braun, and his dog.

My intense interest in the course of the war grew by the day. I had learned the names of the British and German generals. We were receiving fragmentary information about the German concentration camps. Jews who could make their way out of Hitler's furnace slipped into Turkey, immediately to be channeled on to the Middle East to join the British Eighth Army under the command of General Bernard Law Montgomery whose headquarters were in Egypt. General Montgomery was carrying on a crucial war against General Rommel, who was known as the 'desert fox'. It was at this time I became desirous of escaping Turkey and joining the British Eighth Army. But of course, this was impossible because I could not leave Turkey without first completing my military service in the Turkish army.

During one of those harsh winter months a severe earthquake shook Erzinjan, in the east of Turkey. It cost the lives of tens of thousands. There was a great drive to dispatch help. As the war was raging, actually little help came from outside. Bread was rationed, in spite of Anatolia being the bread basket of Turkey. It was at this time that Shukru Sarachoglu's shrewd policy toward the minorities got into gear. The ongoing victories of the German armies gave impetus to the Turkish government to implement their own racist policy. All of a sudden, non-Muslim men from twenty-five to forty-five years of age were called up to military duty. However, these draftees were given neither military uniforms nor weapons. While it was called army service, they were required to wear special dull brown uniforms, which ordinary soldiers did not wear. They were turned into labor battalions and shipped to various parts of Anatolia, assigned to break stones and build roads. It looked very much like the drafting of slave laborers.

Business people, other entrepreneurs and professionals who had never had a pick and shovel in their hands were now involved in compulsory labor. Their families were deprived of all income. Many of the men became ill, especially with malaria, leaving their corpses in those hostile climes. Prime Minister Shukru Sarachoglu was determined to pursue his irrational plan. When he felt that he should dismiss these people, he aimed to gain their gratitude and that of their families. Following a well-calculated policy, a government decree announced their release. It was another example of the age-long psychological tactic: oppress someone, and then loosen the strings, thus making you his respected benefactor on one hand, and gain his gratefulness on the other. Labor battalions were disbanded; brown uniforms were turned in to the government issuer. People gratefully came back to their homes. But alas, a more subtle game was in the making. Hitler's discrimination of Jews and other underdogs was gaining impetus daily and it also affected Turkey's general policy of how to handle its own non-Muslim minorities. The age-long Ottoman policy was an ongoing process.

Varlik Vergisi – Tax on Wealth

The following harsh policy was what they called, *Varlik Vergisi* (i.e., 'tax on wealth'). Once again the non-Muslim minorities were targeted. The accepted argument was that these people made huge fortunes while the Turks lagged behind in the business world. The minorities were said to be paying little tax while becoming rich at the expense of the nation whose benevolence they were misusing. On a given day, tax lists were displayed at the revenue centers. All were non-Muslim names: Greeks, Armenians, Jews and a few lesser groups. When prosperous business people read their names and the amount they were compelled to pay, they were stupefied: unimaginable, astronomic figures, beyond all comprehension. Vast sums of taxes were to be paid immediately into the government coffers. There was no room for any argument to oppose the designated amount. If great merchants and small or middle-sized business people would have resorted to sell everything they owned they still could only have paid an infinitesimal amount of the demanded tax. They would still be under an immense load of debt.

Failing to pay the prescribed amount, all these people who for years were main contributors to Turkey's economy, would have to face a harsh retribution. Most of them were situated in Istanbul and some Jews in Smyrna (Izmir). At first, all their assets would be sequestered. Then their real estate, whatever they had, also their furniture, would be put on the market and even yet their debt would be huge. The next reprisal was to be sent to Ashkale, a God-forsaken region in eastern Anatolia. This way, their debts would be defrayed through forced labor. Once again, they would be breaking stones and building roads for their nation. They would be daily reducing their immense tax obligation, droplet by droplet. Those who refused to pay the tax were termed 'traitors' of the country and tax-evaders. Many of the entrepreneurs were left with no other option than to take the road to Ashkale. After the government placed all businesses and other assets on the market the debt remained. Young and older people involved in all sorts of businesses found themselves in the most disagreeable location in the middle of winter. Who bought their assets? – Turkish men from the interior of the country who had ample funds to make a purchase at a rather low price from the government. The 'ill-omened' citizens realized nothing out of these sales. The aim of Shukru Sarachoglu was double-edged: to take possession of the non-Muslims' businesses and extend great

advantages to Muslims. Naturally, the newcomers to the scene did not know much about operating the enterprises they had suddenly obtained from the government.

Those who unexpectedly found themselves in cruel Ashkale encountered unbelievably hostile conditions. A number of them, especially the older men, died. In the case of our family, once again I must attribute the somewhat more favorable outcome of father's and uncle's lumber businesses to the goodness of our heavenly Father. While they were taxed heavily, they were not targeted in extreme terms as so many others were. Tax exaction was not small, nevertheless. They sold some of their capital, borrowed money from wherever they could and with the leniency of the men in the tax department they could obtain several deferments and keep their businesses alive. Thankfully, Ashkale did not shake our house. However, Dayi's business went bust. All capital and all savings of many years were laid out for this so-called 'wealth tax'. Our benevolent Dayi became indigent and died at the Kuzgunjuk house at the beginning of 1951. My two sisters tenderly cared for him until his death.

What immense miseries were launched by the government of Shukru Sarachoglu! He was adamant in pursuing his course, with deep sympathy for Hitler and his shocking atrocities. During those days a number of entertaining anecdotes were circulating, one of which was: A rich Anatolian farmer came to Istanbul loaded with Turkish liras. He had heard that many apartment buildings were being sold for insignificant amounts. He went to a real estate office and expressed his wish to the manager. He said he wanted to buy an apartment with a box. The agent didn't understand what he meant and asked him to explain what he wanted. The *haji agha*, as the rich from Anatolia were called, said, "An apartment with a box that goes up and comes down."

There was a very adverse wind in several circles against those who 'refused' to pay. They were commonly designated as 'debtors with bad intent'. The cryptic accusation was that these people had huge amounts of money stashed away, while declining to pay the required tax. Their punishment would be the forfeiture of all their belongings and furthermore they would be put on the road to Ashkale. In short, the accusation was interpreted by the general public, "Come what may, we will hang on to our money!" All logic was reduced to a parody. The greater part of the press gave the matter a nationalistic color. I recall Cemalettin Kandemir, a chauvinistic newspaper reporter who right in the middle of winter joined the crew of these condemned Ashkale deportees. He delved into tabloid gossip, sending glossy write-ups to his paper. A line of his was as follows: "One morning the tax evaders were being led to work with pick and shovel in their hands. A wolf appeared on the scene and glanced suspiciously at the duty-bound tax evaders. The beast sensed questionable behavior in them." Mr. Kandemir was correct in his observation. Each one of these people was looked at as a traitor of his country, even diagnosed as such by a wild, wily wolf with nationalistic feelings.

Not amazing! Following the defeat of the Nazis in Stalingrad, Shukru Sarachoglu tried to shake off his chauvinistic sentiments. A quick ruling brought a new dimension to his problem: Those unable to pay would be returned to their places, start work and pay their debt under easier conditions. Thousands of businesses had been ruined, men were reduced to a chunk of flesh and bones; they had lost everything, were demoralized and still were under the obligation to pay those

astronomical debts. The long-term implication should also be touched upon. This monstrous levying of taxes on the minority business community had a negative effect on the economy for years to come. Events kept moving. After some time, Shukru Sarachoglu issued a law of amnesty. Amnesty for the great law-breakers! The government's magnanimity once again was brought to the attention of the country. This act marked the end of many non-Muslim business enterprises. Shukru Sarachoglu made many Muslims rich, bringing them from Anatolia to Istanbul.

We grew up hearing the word *kafir*, i.e., *infidel*. No one could oppose this cognomen, thrown left and right at random. One sobering incident comes to mind. During those years when there were British military experts training Turkish army personnel we invited a few Englishmen to our home. I had a Turkish friend in Kuzgunjuk, eager to practice his English. So I included him in the invitation. While mother was serving tea, Turgut, my Turkish friend who was a graduate of engineering school, in the course of our conversation let the derogatory cognomen 'these *kafirs*' (referring to the Brits) slip off his lips. Instantly realizing that he had made a serious blunder, he backed off and said, "*Affedersiniz!*" i.e., "excuse me!" My quick-witted sister Irini said matter of factly, "If we did not forgive, we couldn't have stayed in this land." This epithet can still be heard in Turkey, especially with the rise of religio-nationalistic fervor. There are many who harbor this sentiment in their chest. Not only the minorities in Turkey were *kafir*, but also the English, French and others. The Russians were 'honored' with their own brand of description: '*Moskof kafiri*'. Of course, there are verses in their religious book instructing the adherents of the proper religion to call non-Muslims *kafir*.

It was during the Shukru Sarachoglu regime that we witnessed another sinister plot. Hitler's ambassador to Ankara was none other than Franz von Papen. In 1933 while chancellor he disingenuously relinquished his post, paving the way for Hitler to take over. He was a master architect of political horseplay. At one point, two Soviet agents plotted an assassination attempt against him, which failed. Von Papen managed Hitler's interests in Turkey very successfully during the war years. Through a special intrigue between him and Hitler the remains of Talat, chief engineer of the Armenian genocide, were shipped to Istanbul with great fanfare. The coffin was received at the Sirkeji railroad terminal in Istanbul with state ceremony and buried at Hurriyet Tepesi, top cemetery in the city for important dignitaries. The extreme racism of the Third Reich was jumping over into Turkey. The minorities were restive about the matter. Some Armenians were saying that the conflict with them was being revived. Talat's corpse in Hurriyet Tepesi cannot be a resolved issue. With the Armenian genocide on the international agenda, what treatment will this man's corpse receive in the years to come?

Right at that period, *Turanism* (pan-Turkishism) was breathing quite freely. A super-nationalist, Nihal Adsiz and his cohorts devised a sinister technique of ascertaining the Turkishness of people. They began measuring people's skulls in accordance with a blueprint they had determined beforehand to test whether the person was of Turkish origin, or not. Exactly the same cranial test was practiced in Hitler's Germany. The authorities must have found this game fraught with danger that they arrested Nihal Adsiz and a number of his accomplices. However, within a short time these chauvinists were all released without being brought to trial. The matter was discreetly dropped.

My Employment

For months on end I was job-hunting; it was not an easy search. One happy day, Jemal Imamoglu came to our house and asked me if I would work in his business place. The shop was in a peculiar state of affairs. The original wholesale company belonged to an Armenian man and his two sons: Hagop and his younger brother, Onnik Daghlarian. It was a going business enterprise, involving primarily the sale of *pastirma*. For those who don't know this famous delicacy of Turkey, I shall briefly describe it. It is made of beef, prepared primarily in Kayseri. The different cuts of meat are salted and dried in the sun for two to three weeks; afterwards, they are thickly smeared with a delicious paste made of garlic, plenty of paprika, and *chemen*, a condiment prepared from ground cumin seeds. Following the thick coating of the meat, it stands one day, exposed to the sun for drying. Then it is stacked in approximately seventy-five kilogram sacks and shipped from Kayseri all over Turkey, particularly to the main cities. Retailers buy a whole sack and sell the various cuts according to the customer's desire. Often they slice it very thin with a meat-slicer in their shop. *Pastirma* is a delectable hors d'oeuvre. Especially in the month of Ramadan, its sale jumps because it is said to be a hearty food which will sustain a person for long hours.

The company of the father and two sons was hit very heavily in Varlik Vergisi and the government put the property and the business itself on sale. This was the predicament of all major companies operated by minority business people. The Imamoglu brothers made excellent *pastirma* in Kayseri. They realized that the purchase of this company would be a very profitable opening for trade in Turkey's major city. Jemal bey – the younger brother – moved to Istanbul to run the newly-owned company, but knowing practically nothing of the business or the market, he was obliged to ask the Armenian brothers, Hagop and Onnik, to run their old business, of course after they returned from the punishment of Ashkale. These smart, industrious Armenians again were running their old business, this time as partners with Jemal bey. Jemal had one besetting weakness; he was scourged by alcohol. He would go on binges for a whole week, when he would disappear from sight. Then he would sober up and come walking nonchalantly back to the shop. He would carry on a relaxed work schedule, without touching the famous *raki* for a brief time. This was Jemal bey's routine.

I got to know Jemal bey through a friend. The firm needed a young man in the sales section. Jemal bey, wishing to employ a minority person, asked me to work for him. This was good employment in a wide world of commerce. We even exported *pastirma* to the Middle Eastern countries. I became a very good friend of Jemal bey whom I futilely tried to save from drinking. Also, my relationship to the Armenian brothers was very good. Besides selling *pastirma* wholesale, the company also dealt with two kinds of well-known cheeses: *kasher*, a pale yellow cheese made of sheep milk, very delicious, and *beyaz peynir* (white cheese, called *Feta* by the Greeks), which came in large, square tins. We also dealt with *kuru bamyas*, dried small okra, which had just emerged from the bud and strung together on long threads. Anatolian village women could be seen tediously stringing these tiny okras for long hours during the summer months. After being thoroughly dried, this commodity was shipped to the wholesalers in large bales.

These basic foodstuffs, along with other items, brought the company plenty of business. My job was to deal with the financial side of the work. I learned a lot about the many intricacies of business, being directly involved in its different angles. Mentioned already, I had a nasty streak of enjoying making fun of underdogs. At the end of WWII, Turkey was coming out of the doldrums of a one-party regime. The proper makeup of democracy had begun. For the first time in the history of the Republic, independent candidates could stand for parliament in their own right, submitting their candidacy to the electoral board. The country was full of silenced, aggrieved, insulated old politicians, writers, thinkers, etc. The candidates' list was stunning. Everybody was seeking the few empty seats from the constituency of Istanbul.

In the market place, there was a heavy-bodied, somewhat jocular, shabbily dressed Armenian small merchant. He was Simon Agha, who had no interest at all in politics. Suddenly, a mean idea struck me: he would make a mirthful candidate. I proceeded with this unfair notion, writing an application to the electoral board of the Istanbul province, as if from Simon Agha, submitting his candidacy. It was natural for candidates to spell out their platform. The plank of this small merchant was to advance the pastirma industry in general. Then I posted the letter. After a couple days, a Greek friend by the name of Faydali in the market area happened to be strolling around. Abruptly, two civil investigators appeared on the scene, making a bee-line for Simon Agha's little shop. At first, he supposed them to be clients and asked them what cut of pastirma they wanted. The two detectives sent by the electoral board to investigate his record apparently understood that there was a fishy angle to his application. However, they proceeded to question their candidate: his pedigree, his past life, any police record, etc. Our friend was flabbergasted and became somewhat apprehensive. He explained that he was only a small merchant without any ambition to delve into the world of politics, pleading with them to leave him alone. The two officials responded with an idiotic grin. Having perceived the hoax they took off to submit their report to the head of the electoral board. The newspapers on the following day reporting the names of the various candidates, wrote, "And there appeared to be a candidate for the parliament without any desire to join the ranks of the members' body." Poor Simon Agha could not interpret the nature and the intricacies of this unpleasant visit by government interrogators.

We had plenty of similar occasions to laugh in a market area where everybody knew everybody. My employment there continued up to my call to military service in April 1946. Then, at my release in August 1948, I rejoined the firm and stayed there until leaving the company for good, when I sailed to the United States in October 1950. It was during my time at this business that I was converted. In the same marketplace, I became a close friend of David Giray, to whom I shall refer later.

Pera-Shishli

Football was an amateur enterprise in Turkey. There were championship games between the major teams. Matches generated much excitement. Two important teams were not included in the organized league. The names of these teams were Pera (consisting of Greeks) and Shishli (made up of Armenians). Pera and Shishli are two sections of Istanbul. Separation of Muslims and non-Muslims extended even to the football pitch. The two teams were left outside of the ordinary league made up of Turkish clubs which nonetheless had a smattering of non-Turkish

players. The Greek and Armenian teams were left to meet two or three times a year between themselves. Their matches were held in the wooden Taxim stadium which location is now a pleasant park. The match drew practically all football fans from the Greek and Armenian communities. The spectators of the two ethnic groups occupied their own sections in the wooden stadium in a highly-electrified atmosphere. There were excellent players on both teams. However, Pera and Shishli had no possibility of ever being promoted to the national association of football teams. At best, they were two minority clubs with plenty of unused talent. Turkish teams sometimes tried to woo ace players from these two clubs. The hot competition between Pera and Shishli went on for some years, but with the passing of time, these two historic clubs died off, just as many other minority institutions passed into the annals of forgotten history.

My military service in the Turkish Army

The Turkish army with its deep roots in a very long tradition takes man's military obligation to the state very seriously. The military has always been a tough and highly demanding establishment. Serving in the army is compulsory to this day. In fact, it is termed as 'duty to the nation'. No one can question the importance of the army and the strict discipline with which it is run. My call to the service came in April 1946 while I was carrying on with my work. The favorable aspect was that it happened to be just before summer. Being drafted in the winter would have been highly disadvantageous. I presented myself at the enlistment center and was sent to Selimiye barracks on the Asiatic side. This historic military recruitment center was conveniently used by the British forces during the Crimean War (1854-55). It was here that Florence Nightingale (1820-1910) landed in Üsküdar (Scoutari) with her team of thirty other nurses to care for the British soldiers wounded in the war. She introduced medical services hitherto unknown, bringing alleviation of pain and solace to the injured soldiers. She came to be known as 'the lady with the lamp', becoming a symbol of comfort and healing. She is considered the founding mother of modern nursing.

The uncomfortable tenure of my military service started here. We were kept in these barracks for about a week and then shipped to our designated section of the country in train wagons, packed in like sardines. No place to sit; no place to lie down. They were teaching us from the very outset that military life was for real men. My destination was the city of Chankiri, north of Ankara, where I was to serve in a motor unit. Something special happened with my group of draftees. The decision was made in line with the post-war wind blowing everywhere, following the end of World War II. The minorities who until then would only serve in non-combatant duties were now to be put on equal footing with the Muslims who constituted the principal part of the army, and given weapons. So for the first time we were given guns. The six-month-long basic training period was to be in this motor unit.

The group commander, Mustafa, was a highly-disciplined and dedicated officer. He also was very harsh to those who couldn't meet his expectations. One day he was out teaching a soldier to drive a jeep. The poor fellow couldn't drive properly, so Mustafa started beating him as he was sitting behind the wheel. The jeep careened off the road, hurtling down a cliff and both were killed. A great military funeral was held for Mustafa; the soldier's body was sent back to his village. This was not an

easy period for most of us, but it did set me to thinking about the more serious aspects of life.

There were illiterate soldiers in our unit. Each of them was assigned to a literate soldier. My share was with a guy named Ismael. Not having had any experience in teaching, it was a hard undertaking to help him 'learn letters'. I don't know if he could finally tackle the learning of the alphabet. One night, our preposterously ignorant corporal was forcing all sleeping soldiers with a stroke of his belt, one after the other, to get out of bed. With great consternation, he was hitting those who didn't wake up. He was yelling at the top of his voice, "Get up! This is the hour of crisis!" As soon as I woke up, I heard the agonizing prayers in Arabic emanating from kneeling soldiers already awake. They were sending their tormented pleas to Allah. What was it all about? We were experiencing an eclipse of the moon! Until now in many places of Anatolia, a moon eclipse is considered a terrible omen of some impending disaster. Of course, our much-needed sleep was abruptly brought to a halt.

Yusuf, our bow-legged cook, was a very simple man. The food was totally monotonous, mostly bulgur pilaf (cracked wheat), with a good smattering of little stones which were a challenge to our teeth. Being exhausted from the strenuous drilling, we eagerly waited for mealtime and wolfed down our food. Yusuf was a poor simple country boy. The custom was when a soldier was discharged; he was given a stipend which he was supposed to use to travel home if there was no train service to his destination. Yusuf, being a very poor country boy, wanted to save this money, so decided to walk all the way to his village, a journey of a few days. Later we learned with sadness of heart that on the way he had been attacked and devoured by hungry wolves. Our monthly pay was ridiculously nonsensical; twenty-five kurush (piaster), equivalent to twenty-five cents at the time. Naturally those of us who had caring families were blessed with a monthly dispatch of monetary assistance. The poor village fellows did not enjoy this luxury.

At the conclusion of six months, those who had desk experience were sent to different offices to do clerical work. I was assigned to quartermaster of supplies. The three of us who worked together had a very kind, fatherly officer. He appointed me as soldier in charge of daily bread distribution. It was an engaging occupation, but carried its risks. I was assigned a horse carriage with its driver. Every morning we would set out on the two kilometer trek to the military bakery, which served all units in the area. There we would pick up our share of bread, about four hundred loaves, and return to distribute them to the various units from the small shop I was operating. Along the road as we returned, a person here and there would snatch a loaf and run. There was a ready market for his find.

The bread was really good and made up for the lack in the poor diet at the base. While I was distributing bread, one to a person each day, eager hands would grab two instead of one. The responsibility for any lack at the end of the distribution fell on me. Somehow I could manage this pilfering and ended up without any deficit. My having good relations with the baker was a help because he always threw in a few extra loaves. This relatively simple responsibility lasted for about a year. Every day, with the exception of Sunday, I distributed bread. On Saturday, everybody got two loaves. I was settled to remain in this job until the end of my military service.

But then an order came to our headquarters from Ankara: Any soldier with the knowledge of English should be sent to the capital to perform his duty as interpreter for British military experts. This interesting request certainly had direct implication for me. My fatherly officer kindly consented to release me. I bade him and my comrades farewell and caught the train for Ankara where I checked in with my new unit. The commander of the post, Colonel H. Bilgesu, an extremely kind and benevolent officer, was very happy to receive an English-speaking soldier to help the British technicians who at the time were equipping the Turkish motor units with all sorts of parts. As you see, I switched from bread distribution to dispersing mechanical parts! Every part was numbered, so there was no problem with the English names. It was a very enjoyable task. It didn't take long to make close friends with the British. I enjoyed spending weekends in their houses where several of them lived together. Each residence was provided with a Turkish maid. In the house that I often visited, the British officer was conveniently enjoying the favors of the maid. None of them were real Christians, nor was I at the time.

It was spring 1948 when U.S. military assistance in accordance with the Truman Doctrine started flowing into Turkey. Naturally, this was accompanied by American personnel, who would instruct the Turks about the use of the equipment coming in. This period of time marked the beginning of the cold war, which was to intensify with the passing years. Suddenly U.S. military personnel were in Ankara without any knowledge of Turkish at a time when there were precious few Turkish military men who knew any English at all. I immediately made friends with these Americans and soon found out that their intention was to switch me to work for them as interpreter. The top British officer, just mentioned, became quite aggravated about this plan. At that time the British personnel started being eased out, to be replaced by the Americans. The shining of the U.S. star was evidenced everywhere. The new super-power was replacing the long-time traditional one, i.e., the British, not only in our situation, but in every location where Great Britain had been supreme for centuries. Little by little, this position was being relinquished to the rising world power. In my view, it would have been better for America to continue being of second-rate importance. From what pains our country would have been spared! But who could predict it at the time? And now, who knows what lies ahead?

Within a short time, I was interpreter for the Americans. It was right at the point when the first U.S. assistance started pouring in. It won't be wrong to say that I was interpreter to the very first American military instructors in Turkey. The concept of the U.S.A. was to work its way into an overall American presence in the country — not only in the military, but in several other areas as well. With the passing of time, the U.S. would pour an astronomical amount of funds into the Turkish military and economy. The end result is that the U.S.A. is disliked and unpopular in Turkey today, as in so many other countries. This distasteful evolution has been studied widely by students of modern history, and papers have been written about it. The question comes to mind: What has caused the U.S. to become so unpopular in lands like Turkey, which were the beneficiaries of the American taxpayers' money? Who can estimate the enormous figure of American aid? Besides money, a very high volume of know-how was directed into the country. We all have some opinion about it, but this is not the place to open a discussion on the subject.

When I started my military service, the designated time was three years. The Americans found this duration too long. The country did not have to keep a long-term army in post-war years. I had already served twenty-six months, anticipating ten more months. Then out of the blue, an order was issued by the Turkish military establishment that the service was reduced to two years. I was eligible for immediate discharge. This was an unexpected development at a time when I was absorbed in a stimulating involvement, all done for twenty-five kurush per month! The canteen at our post was run by a soldier of Bulgarian extraction. I always carried a Turkish Incil (New Testament) with me. When he saw it in my hand he said, "Can you leave it here?" So I left my Turkish NT at the canteen without quite having the burden for evangelism. Soldiers started reading it when they dropped in at the canteen. But I had one snag before me that had to be solved.

Somewhere along the way, my military-issued overcoat had been stolen and apparently sold by some needy soldier. I could have been court-martialed and deprived of my release, but my immediate commander, a young officer with whom I had very good relations, understood my quandary and said, "I'll let it go." I thank God for this pleasing development. There are some people in life whose single display of kindness and assistance cannot be forgotten. My services in this post had been greatly appreciated. Our colonel gave me a very commendatory letter. I was now a free man. I must conclude, however, that after a diversified twenty-six months in the military I had become thirsty for the true teaching of my faith. I returned home to the great joy of my family, especially my mother, as a seeking person.

My Search for New Horizons

A year passed. Yiayia went to the Lord in 1949 and Dayi died in 1951, shortly after I had left for the United States. Within a few short years, our seven-member family in Kuzgunjuk shrunk to four. I felt very sorry for having lost Dayi, a very beloved member of our household.

During my military service a genuine thirst for truth was perturbing my inner world. This was to lead me to that wonderful encounter of conversion to Jesus Christ. Meeting the Savior in July 1949 changed the course of my life. I was an arrogant and stubborn sinner, living a quarter of a century in this condition, without realizing the purpose for my existence or comprehending what life was all about. Knowing well the sad condition of minority peoples in Turkey I had no desire to marry there and carry on a life in the community of discriminated people. I completed my military service in the Turkish army in August 1948 and returned to my former job in a wholesale company.

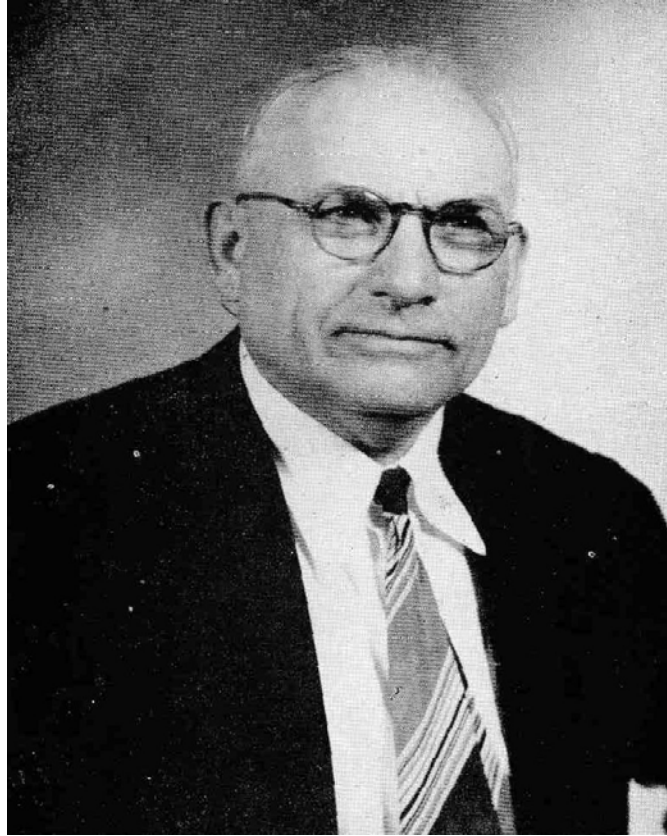
I started contemplating migrating abroad with the intention of eventually inviting my whole family to join me. Australia became my dream country. Among the various short-wave radio broadcasts to which I listened was Radio Australia. What I heard in those programs fascinated me. I also took up the habit of listening to BBC World Service, a fondness which has never left me. One day I heard a news analyst on BBC who was mentioned as being Australian. Unfortunately, I cannot remember his name. He became my connection to that country. I wrote to him and spelled out my desire. He replied very kindly that he had referred my letter to a community leader of Greeks in Sydney. It was not long before I heard from a Mr. Simeonides,

who was volunteering to assist me to migrate to Australia. What joy filled my heart! Many years later, on my first visit 'down under', I learned from Pastor Michael Glinatsis that Mr. Simeonides was a member of the Greek Evangelical congregation and had informed them about my intended migration. In the days prior to globalization Australia was a very distant country. My mother could not bear the thought of my leaving the family and taking off for this distant land. No amount of persuasion could convince her that this was the right move for me. Nonetheless, I proceeded with preparations to make my desire a reality. One day I received an official invitation which secured me a job and the right of entry to Australia. This document is still somewhere among my archives. But apparently my mother was praying in her own way for my plans to change.

Following my discharge from military service, along with the search for another country, I began to realize my need for a meaningful spiritual change. My sisters and I were received as members of the Bible House Immanuel Church. I became a regular attendant and an active member of the youth group. However, I was still missing the dimension which makes for the fulfilled life. I attended prayer meetings conducted by Vahram Tatikian, kept close company with Brother David Giray, a converted Jew from Russia, and was in earnest search of true spiritual life. In the meantime, I was madly saving from my meager salary to have enough money for the purchase of a boat ticket for Sydney. I needed to go to Port Said from Istanbul, from there transfer to an ocean liner and sail on to New South Wales.

In the beginning of summer 1949, suddenly a news item with pictures splashed across the front pages of the Turkish dailies. A group of four men from the United States had arrived in Turkey to obtain permission to climb Mt. Ararat in the east to search for Noah's Ark. But they encountered the well-known Turkish red-tape and were obliged to wait in Istanbul for governmental approval. The Soviets were making protestations to the Turks that this group was actually seeking to climb Mt. Ararat in order to spy into Soviet territory. This made matters more difficult.

As I continued reading the daily news items about the expeditionary group a thought flashed into my mind, 'Why not attempt to make the acquaintance of Dr. A. J. Smith, leader of the group?' One evening after work I went to the Alp Hotel in Pera where Dr. Smith was staying. When I asked at the desk if it would be possible to see Dr. Smith, they called him down to the lobby. He impressed me as being very humble and congenial. He told me he was a minister of the Gospel. Immediately I asked him, "Would you like to speak in our church next Sunday morning? I will be glad to contact the elders." He was highly pleased and told me that on the preceding Sunday, not finding an evangelical gathering, he had worshiped in a Greek Orthodox Church. Next day, I ran to one of the elders, who was very happy for the arrangement.



Dr. A. J. Smith

The news was spread around that Dr. Smith was going to speak at the Immanuel Bible House Church. The sanctuary was filled, more than usual. Mr. Fawl, an elderly American Board member, who spoke Turkish like a Turk, was the interpreter. The message was beyond the ordinary preaching from that pulpit. Many people were deeply touched. Also in the crowd was evangelist Vahram Tatikian, who was fascinated to hear that this guest followed the same line as he did. Immediately, several people expressed the desire for an afternoon meeting. Dr. Smith readily complied. Even more people were in the congregation at that meeting than in the morning service. But, alas, Mr. Fawl was not present! So Dr. Smith was left without an interpreter to translate from English into Turkish. Vahram Tatikian and a few others made it plain that the task was to fall on me. I trembled, hesitated and resisted, but finally yielded. I had heard many guest speakers in that church whose messages were translated by others, but never by me.

I was hoping that Dr. Smith would preach simply so that I would not be embarrassed. With trepidation I took my place next to him and he started giving his testimony. He explained that he had been a Methodist missionary in China, but without any results. All missionaries lived within their own compound. One of them became ill. His condition worsened. They decided to pray for his recovery. The Lord healed him. This development brought the whole compound into a spiritual awakening. A number admitted that they had never been born again, including our speaker. In a Holy-Spirit controlled atmosphere confession of sin poured out and lives were yielded to the Savior. The missionaries immediately started witnessing to the Chinese, confessing to them the way they misbehaved

toward their employees. This stirred a new interest among the Chinese, who also found their way into this remarkable revival. Many Chinese were converted.

Then Dr. Smith proceeded to his message, taken from John 11:39: 'Take Away the Stone.' He mentioned that until the day of his conversion there had been the heavy stone of sin upon his heart, which had kept him dead and dormant, just as Lazarus was dead under that stone. He said that the Lord Jesus Christ could have removed the inanimate stone at Lazarus' grave with a simple command. Instead, he gave the order for people to remove it. Then followed his application: "Your life is dead and dormant under the heavy stone of sin. Take it away. Then your selfish, hardened and resistant heart will be brought to life by Christ." Now consider me, an unsaved young fellow uttering these words. For years I had heard messages along similar lines but this was the opportune hour of the Holy Spirit. The power of that message with me repeating these Spirit-filled words touched my heart as no other message had ever done. There was a divine hush in the assembly, but much more so in the inner world of the interpreter. I could have broken down right then and there and cried to God for that terrible stone of sin to be removed from my stubborn heart. Now I knew that this stone of sin had prevented the light of Jesus Christ from coming into my inner life for many years.

Following the meeting there was great joy expressed by many for this unusual message. I couldn't wait to run to my home on the other side of the Bosphorus. When I got there, I went straight to my bedroom, knelt at my bedside and confessed all my sins to God, asking for the blood of Jesus Christ to cleanse me. He never failed anyone and He didn't fail me. For the first time in my life I knew that grace and forgiveness took over my sinful heart.

*Long my imprisoned spirit lay
Fast bound in sin and nature's night;
Thine eye diffused a quickening ray—
I woke, the dungeon flamed with light;
My chains fell off, my heart was free;
I rose, went forth and followed Thee.
Amazing love! How can it be
That Thou my God, shouldst die for me?*
Charles Wesley

My life was suddenly transformed. A new dimension and direction was mine. Christ was all-in-all in my re-born life. His joy and reality captivated me. Immediately He opened my mouth, granting me the spirit of whole-hearted witness. Many people who knew me were amazed with what had happened to me. Jemal bey, my Turkish boss, to whom I have already made reference, one day remarked: "What happened to you? You were a good fellow." Ten years later when I returned from the United States, I visited him in his home. His poor wife had left him. He was a total captive of *raki* (a strong anis-flavored alcoholic drink). He was very happy for my visit and said, "Toma, (as they used to call me), is there any hope for me?" "Of course," I said, "Christ is the sole Hope. He can deliver you from drink and any other sin." There was a real bond of love between us. I will be highly surprised if I ever see him in Christ's presence as he hailed from a very Islamic family, but he himself had no interest in religion whatever. His last name was '*Imamoglu*', 'son of imam' (religious leader).

Parenthetically, a word about Dr. Smith's expedition: He was obliged to stay in Istanbul for a few more weeks because the permission to scale the mountain wasn't granted. Finally when it arrived toward the end of August he and his group traveled to that area, but the season was past. The weather worsened and they could only climb to a certain height. They couldn't accomplish anything. I always remark that Dr. Smith came to search for Noah's ark. But without his realizing it God sent him to my city to search and find me for Jesus Christ. As is commonly known, many expeditionary groups, including one in which Astronaut James Irwin took part, have traveled to Mt. Ararat to find the remains of the Ark – always without success. The argument continues that its remains are somewhere in the icy crevices of this vast mountain. The ark remains a testimonial to our present sinful generation that it will not escape God's judgment just as Noah's generation couldn't escape it (*Luke 17:26, 27*).

With the spirit of witness having taken hold of my life, I continually sought opportunities to tell people about my newly-found Savior. How I wish I had been doing this many years before! I would like to address any young person who is reading this account, "Don't delay in responding to the invitation extended by Jesus Christ. Otherwise, there will be only regrets for lost years."

In the wholesale food market where I worked, Brother David Giray, already referred to, was the only witnessing business person. He had his own cheese business. Our friendship was not new, but when he found me to be in the company of believers he greatly rejoiced. He would drop into the office every day and pray with me. He encouraged me in the faith, supported and guided me. His tutorship in my early steps of faith was very valuable. After business hours we used to attend prayer meetings in different houses and I would return home rather late. My mother never went to bed until I was in the house and the door was locked behind me. She was taken aback with my zeal in my newly found faith. Her wish was to see me come home right after work every evening. One evening when I returned late, she remarked, "One Moschos is gone; another has come!" I am sure old Brother Moschos had prayed for me. I can now see how amazing God's ways are in dealing with a young sinner until he brings him into his fold.

Brother David had a house in Emirgan on the European side of the Bosphorus. He often invited me to go there and spend the night with him in prayer. An old Armenian sister, Hayguhi, mother of Hamparsum Zaruki, used to join us. What glorious prayer nights we had together! Brother David taught me many basics about prayer. Sometimes we walked together over the Galata Bridge, surrounded by pedestrians coming and going. All of a sudden he would say, "Let us pray," so we stopped at the side of the bridge, bowed our heads and prayed. The Holy Spirit was upon me, constantly stirring me to witness for my Savior. He would motivate me to open my mouth and talk about Jesus to anyone I happened to meet. What rejuvenation this brought to my new faith! Here I was, born and reared in an evangelical family, had attended church all my life, knew truths from the Bible and had many Christian friends. But until then the joy of the new birth and the thrill of witnessing for my Savior had not touched me. I started seeking a new direction for my life, which until then was without clear guidance. Filled with the Holy Spirit, I sought to find the purpose for my life, with my Savior's backing. Australia was still my prime option, since I had the valuable invitation in hand.

My First Visit to Greece

Until that time I had never been outside of Turkey. In the beginning of 1950 an urge developed in my heart to visit Greece. I was very eager to visit the churches and meet Greek Christians. The country was in the aftermath of a horrendous ordeal. Four years of harsh German occupation was followed immediately by a merciless civil war between Communists and Royalists. I obtained a visa to visit Greece and on a lovely spring day I climbed the gangplank of the ship at Galata, bound for Piraeus. The following day we disembarked. Uncle Costas, father's youngest brother, was there to meet me and take me home. The painful post-war and civil war years of Greece had left deep scars.

For the first time, I visited evangelical churches in Greece. People having undergone indescribable suffering were experiencing deep delight in their Savior who had carried them through the trying years. There were a number of churches in the Athens and Piraeus area, all of which I visited and had fellowship with. Attending the Piraeus Evangelical Church where my Pappou (grandfather) had been an elder was a special delight. I met the pastor of the church, Stavros Deliyannides, with whom a life-long friendship and cooperation ensued. Taking part in the young people's meetings in churches was uplifting to my soul. Of course, my Greek was not quite the language the Athenians spoke. But people didn't mind; they were happy to have a young Greek believer from Constantinople visit them and share his testimony. I noticed that they never used the word 'Istanbul'. To them 'Constantinople' was always 'Constantinople'. Nostalgia never leaves one, even with the passage of centuries. The Germans still call 'Königsberg' by this name, totally ignoring the Russian given name, 'Kaliningrad'.

I traveled north and south visiting churches in as many places as I could within the short time I had. They all described the anguish Hitler's war had brought upon their small country. At the start of the war with Italy, Greece had just reached the point of seeing the wounds of the Anatolian Catastrophe (1922) healed. Then the civil war brought further unimaginable destruction and grief. Brother turned against brother. The Greek temperament, being what it is, caused passions between leftists and rightists to run very high. An ensuing trauma was the transferring of many thousands of Greek children and young people to the already Marxist-controlled Eastern European countries. When the communists realized that they had lost the civil war, many of them moved to Eastern Europe, taking a great number of children with them, some not their own. They did not wish to leave children under 'Fascist rule', as they called it. Their intention was to indoctrinate them in Marxism, hoping to return and take over the country. Years later when Lila and I traveled to the Eastern European countries, we met some of these young people now in adulthood and very well educated. Many longed to return to Greece, a total impossibility at the time. However, conditions change radically, and almost all of these people are now back in Greece enjoying the capitalistic lifestyle.

During my visit in Greece, being with people whose roots were in Asia Minor or Pontus was a special joy. One of my exciting experiences was going to the village of Neos Mylotopos. All people in this village had come from a town in Cilicia known as Gurumze. Twenty-five years had elapsed and the whole village was still speaking Turkish. Naturally, the young people already spoke fluent Greek. Their meeting

place was a sizeable room. They used the Turkish Bible and hymnal with Greek characters. When I spoke to them in Turkish, they were delighted beyond measure. They needed Turkish Bibles and hymnals with Greek characters. Upon my return to Istanbul I gathered quite a number of these from churches where they were no longer in use and sent them to this church. They could not amply express their gratitude. All the older ones spoke only Turkish. When they passed away, their Turkish died with them. Today only a few old-timers can converse in an out-dated Turkish. Their grandchildren don't know Turkish at all. This church welcomes Turkish Christians who at times visit Greece.

A very exciting visit was to the city of Katerini in Macedonia, not far from the sea. This place was entirely settled by evangelical Greeks who had come from Pontus following the catastrophe. They were from every town and village in Pontus where evangelical churches had flourished and carried on a strong witness. With the defeat of the Greek army in Izmir (Smyrna) in 1922, people in the whole of Asia Minor were uprooted from their land which had been their home for centuries. They had to leave their beautiful homes, farms and orchards, as well as their churches and schools. The Pontian Greeks left whole plantations of thriving hazelnut groves. The Greek government offered them land in an insignificant town called Katerini. It is located at the foot of Mt. Olympus in rich farming area. It has developed into a bustling commercial city. I had much in common with these new settlers and we reminisced for hours about life in Turkey.

They had built a large evangelical church with a capacity for nearly a thousand people. Their young pastor, Argos Zodhiates, a Cypriot, was called from his ministry in Egypt to serve this church. He had arrived at a very crucial time when the civil war was still going on. He and his wife Victoria welcomed me and immediately he asked me to give my testimony to the large congregation. I cannot forget the thrill and excitement of that meeting. People were delighted to hear for the first time the story of a Greek still living in Turkey. I was invited to many homes, where some knew my family in Istanbul. I only wished that I had more time to visit everyone.

While there I also met Aneta Bostanjoglu, wife of Haralambos Bostanjoglu, who had been hung in Marash, Turkey in 1916 at the height of the Armenian massacre. After living in the United States for many years, she returned to Greece to serve in the Katerini church. Before she went to meet the Lord she related her husband's sad saga to me, which I later compiled. This poignant account is now on our website. It can be read at: www.cosmades.org.

The dynamic pastor, Argos Zodhiates, had started a Bible school for young pastors as one of the ministries of the church. He invited pastors from all over Greece to teach block lessons. Almost all the students who graduated from this institute filled empty pulpits throughout Greece. Now they have either died or are retired. Argos also started an orphanage where he gathered youngsters whose parents had died during WWII and the civil war which followed. In addition to all of this, he bought a good-sized piece of land on the shore of the Aegean, where he opened the Leptokaria summer camp and conference ground. This choice site has progressed into a center of many activities, drawing people several months of the year.

Pastor Argos was not a Greek citizen. Hailing from the island of Cyprus, he held a British passport. This served as reason for the Greek Orthodox bishop of Katerini to

retaliate against the vigorous evangelical pastor. All the sixteen years of Pastor Argos' effective ministry in Katerini were a hard battle. One attack followed another. The reader can appreciate the war of nerves through which this pastor went while trying to minister adequately to the large congregation. At the time Greece was almost entirely controlled by the Orthodox Church; the government often succumbed to the demands of the Greek Orthodox Synod. In 1963 jealousy reached its apex. Pastor Argos Zodhiates went to England with his family for some weeks. On his return by train to Greece at the Yugoslav-Greek border, he learned that he had become *persona non grata* and could not re-enter the country. One of the former students of the Bible institute who had become his assistant took over the ministry. Following this, Rev. Zodhiates ministered in England for some years. Then he moved to Boston, Massachusetts, where a large Pontian evangelical community had come into being. He organized these people into a congregation, purchased an old Congregational church in Newton Corner, Mass., renovated it and started a strong Greek Evangelical Church. His wife Victoria initiated a Greek language school for youngsters who had no other opportunity to be taught reading and writing in their mother tongue. While ministering in Boston, the Lord called Argos home in 1977 after an arduous life. He died at the age of sixty-two.

At this point, I must refer to my visit in Thessaloniki. Aunt Eugenia Deliyannidou, my father's only sister, was living there with her family. Her husband was a teacher at Anatolia College, which had its roots in Marsovan, (now Merzifon) Turkey. Also I visited relatives from my mother's side. My time in Thessaloniki was delightful, again having fellowship in churches, giving my testimony and enjoying a pleasant time with my relatives whom I had not met until then. Among them were two old aunts who had come from Anatolia at the time of the population exchange between Greece and Turkey. Time was flying. My return to Istanbul was imminent. I traveled from Thessaloniki to Piraeus, port of Athens, by boat.

One of the pleasant experiences during my brief stay in Athens was meeting a remarkable Danish lady, Miss Mary Østergaard. She was called 'Miss Mary' by everyone. This dear woman was sent as a young lady missionary from Denmark to the miserable Armenian refugees from Anatolia who providentially had made their way to Greece. She lovingly bound up their spiritual, physical and psychological wounds. At a time when these people had nowhere to go in this strange land, she built a lovely hostel for them, with wide grounds under Mediterranean pines in Nea Erithrea. This place on the north side of Athens is now one of the plush sections of the city. She took in widowed ladies and orphaned children whom she accommodated, fed and clothed. She daily taught them the comforting Word of God, leading many to the assurance of salvation and to the reality of the Savior's sustaining power. At one point, the Danish king recognized her remarkable service to the Armenian refugees in Greece. Miss Mary spent her whole life in this glowing ministry, where she poured herself out to all sorts of people until the end. At a very old age, she moved back to a rest home in Jutland, Denmark where she died at the age of 104.

Following a short time there, I bade farewell to all new friends and also to relatives. With an abundance of sweet experiences, I sailed home to Istanbul to resume my work and life. However, something very profound had happened to me while visiting Greece and giving my testimony in churches. Meeting young and old Christians was a very uplifting experience. Several people had asked me, "Are you considering

going into the service of the Lord?” Indeed, it became clear following this momentous visit that the Lord was calling me to spread the Gospel, especially in Turkey, a totally barren land at the time. Many Christians were praying for Turkey and undoubtedly some for the raising up of workers. The Holy Spirit was making it plain to me that I ought to minister to the people of this land where I had spent twenty-five years of my life as an unconverted and unfruitful person.

I continued fellowshiping, witnessing and praying, all the while waiting for the Lord’s direction in my life. There was an old Congregational missionary couple, Mr. and Mrs. James K. Lyman. They had spent long years of faithful service in Turkey, especially in the city of Marash. Among the older missionaries, he was one with a clear-cut testimony of salvation. Along with some local believers, he had a great interest in me and influenced my life profoundly. One day he handed me a fascinating book: ‘C. T. Studd, Cricketer’. To those who are not familiar with this amazing life story, I can still highly recommend it after so many years. I devoured this touching account. After reading it, any doubt or wavering in my mind regarding committing myself to the service of the Lord vanished once and for all. This illustrious life story injected a fresh desire to serve Jesus Christ. Now there was no other option for my purposeless life. A genuine joy overwhelmed me. When I explained my determined decision to the brothers who were eagerly following the course of my life, they encouraged and helped me. I believe the prayers of old Brother Moschos for me were now finding their fulfillment. At last it was clear that God had laid his blessed hand on me. I was already actively involved in preaching in churches. While I always regret that my life of faith did not start earlier, I know that God had his own time, for which I praise his name.

6/7 September 1955

In the difficult and oppressive war years, the minorities were in the state of waiting for what was to come. The war ended; Turkey became one of the early members of the United Nations. Democracy and free elections were now a daily and ordinary performance in national politics. In 1950, the long-lasting one-party tenure of CHP (People’s Party) was terminated and the new political formation known as ‘Democrat Party’ took the helm of the government into its hand. From top to bottom, practically all the new government ministers were former CHP members. This party swept the elections with an overwhelming parliamentary majority; they were given a mandate. All minorities heralded the new era as a bright and highly-promising period of democracy after the long-stretched one-party rule of modern Turkey.

The Democrat Party came with a new motto: ‘A mosque for every village’. Islam which had been suppressed by Ataturk, was now acquiring a new image. One of the first legislations of the Democrat Party was to introduce Quran readings, naturally in Arabic, on national radio. At this time, I was newly converted, full of zeal and exuberance for Jesus Christ. The element of faith brought an original thought to my mind: to write a letter to Prime Minister Adnan Menderes, congratulating him and expressing my thought that the introduction of the Quran readings on the radio was a fresh and bold venture. Turkey was a laic state, according to the constitution. Keeping in harmony with the prescribed law, minorities should be given equal rights. Considering the existence of Jews and Christians in the country, could not the Prime Minister introduce a practice of having Bible readings in

Turkish, both from the Old and the New Testaments? As an example of a passage, I wrote out Psalm 91 and with prayer sent the letter to him.

When I told what I had done to my friends who were still under the influence of the past oppressive mindset, they remarked, "What courage!" The reader of these memoirs is undoubtedly eager to follow the outcome. I sent the letter by registered mail. A signature of its receipt was returned, but nothing beyond that. I was expecting too much by expressing my anticipation with this very bold suggestion.

Shortly after the beginnings of the new government, I left the country for the United States. It was October, 1950. The valuable invitation to obtain a visa was supplied by none other than Dr. A. J. Smith, my spiritual father. After the journey by ship, which originated in Piraeus, Greece, I finally glimpsed the lights of New York. From the very outset of my arrival, I followed the meager news from Turkey. The well-known Cyprus debacle, which continues to be a sore problem until now, had its start in the early fifties. The unending conflict between Turkey and Greece was not to find a solution. This became an issue of national pride on the part of both Turks and Greeks. Prolonged negotiations continued without any success, especially due to nationalistic sentiments.

Deep-seated feelings of nationalism were the daily occurrence in Turkey. Greece and Turkey had enjoyed a certain measure of favorable relations following the end of the bitter Anatolian War in 1922 with the defeat of the Greek army. Turkey became a republic with a parliamentary system. It was in the interest of both governments to encourage good relations, but once again the two countries were at loggerheads. At this time, the Greek minority in Turkey, i.e., in Istanbul and the two Greek-inhabited islands, Imvros and Tenethos, at the very head of the Dardanelles, numbered about 100,000. After the sad WWII events, the Greek minority was once again enjoying a normal life. However, the conflict over the island of Cyprus again opened old wounds, brought ancient acrimonies and unhealed feelings to the fore.

Turkish nationalism over the issue picked up momentum day by day. The Menderes government, instead of pacifying the deep-seated friction, only added fuel to the fire. The nationalist press was very much in support of its hard-line policy: Cyprus should be divided between Turkey and Greece. Incidentally, the population of Cyprus was somewhere around 500,000 Greeks and 100,000 Turks. The Greek minority in Turkey was living very nervous days during this period. The ecumenical patriarch, Athenagoras, and leaders of the Greek community tried their utmost to keep themselves from the controversial acrimony, but to no avail. Finally, the wrath of the Turks brought retribution to the Greek minority in Istanbul, which played no role whatever in the dangerous confrontation. Certain newspapers began spreading the rumor that wealthy Greeks of the business community were secretly funneling funds to the Cypriot EOKA fighters in Cyprus. Even the uninformed reader can surmise the dangerous exposure of the Greek minority emanating from this unfounded reporting.

The traditional reaction of the Turkish populace to any issue of national engagement and emergency is well-known. The Menderes government and the circulation-hungry media, without regard for the emotional upsurge of their people, ignited the flame. Instead of seeking ways to pacify the inordinate clamor they provoked the people's sentiments. An outburst was in the making, without anyone caring about

the impending eruption. As the Turkish saying goes, 'The knife touched the bone.' All of a sudden, a brazenly concocted news item appeared in the tabloid, 'Istanbul Express': "A bomb was planted in Atatürk's house in Thessaloniki." Menderes liked the item and gave orders that the news be broadcast on national radio. It was not difficult to foresee the impending rage. 'Istanbul Express' printed a second edition in which it elaborated on the contrived story. The stage for a violent fulmination was set. Actually, all preliminary plans had been devised of how to start and carry out the meticulously-arranged onslaught against the Greeks and their properties, churches and several institutions throughout Istanbul.

It was the night of September 6/7, 1955. Many opportunists had come from the interior of the country to Istanbul. Everybody was sensing the ominous and destructive display of hatred. Greek shops, homes, churches, cemeteries and other properties all became targets of the unrestrained mobs. The stage was set. Objects of the onslaught were precisely fixed: Who is living in this place? What is his occupation? Who are his family members? All plans were punctiliously drawn up. On that infamous night many Greek homes were ransacked, rapes occurred, shops were devastated and looted, churches desecrated; even corpses were taken out of tombs and exposed. The hair-raising atrocities are known in Greek as, 'ta Septemvriana', i.e., 'The September Events'. Paradoxically, today middle-age Turkish people hardly know anything about that woeful night. They prefer not to know it and the media which is full of information about past and present events does not particularly care to shed light on that night of horror. No mention is made of the staging and ultimate execution of the attacks.



Two scenes of the destruction on Istanbul's Pera Boulevard the day after

Nevertheless, that despicable eruption in Turkey's current history continues to cause embarrassment and regret to thinking Turks. On the fiftieth anniversary of the villainous event, September 2005, a few stalwart Turkish writers, teachers and other intellectuals arranged the recognizance of that ignominious nationalistic explosion. In a medium-sized room of an apartment building in a modern section of Istanbul they arranged a modest display of memorabilia, pictures and other documents. Notice was given to the public to visit the place and be informed about the results of that nationalistic outburst. Naturally, the hardcore element of fanatics was apprised of it. Even before visitors started coming to the exposition the unsightly, angry crowd burst into the place. They pulled down posters and pictures from the walls, tore them to pieces, and destroyed the carefully-assembled articles in this innocent exhibition. The display was wrecked, so interested people wanting to learn what had happened on that shameful night of September 1955 were deprived of this crucial information. Modern-day nationalists were following in the steps of their fathers and grandfathers.

Our house in Kuzgunjuk was not left immune to the merciless attack. Well over one hundred determined frenzied men charged against the house in the wee hours of the morning with clubs and large stones. My sister Irini was pregnant to Petro, her second son, at the time. One could not imagine that the bolted wooden front door would be able withstand this furious onslaught. However, by God's mighty protection, they could not break the door down. Not a single glass in all the windows, both upstairs and down, was left unbroken. The house bore the marks of the onslaught of fury. In the meantime, threats were hurled that they were going to burn the house down. However, the family within built a strong bulwark through their earnest prayers. At dawn, the mob quickly dispersed, shouting profanities for all to hear. The whole family, with the two daughters, was all spared after undergoing a trial of fire. This became an amazing testimony. May Christ be praised a million times!

The determined crowd had somehow been informed that I was studying theology. They all incessantly shouted, "Bring out the priest – Makarios' friend." I was not a priest, neither a friend of Archbishop Makarios, nor was I in the house. The fanciful accusations stirred the fanaticism of the crowd. The uncontrolled fury of nationalists which had been accumulating for a number of years precipitated the outburst of this dark episode. At the first ray of dawn the family viewed the desolate house, but no one dared to capture a photo. Right at that time, an international monetary conference was taking place in Istanbul where top delegates from every major country had gathered. With the sad happenings very much in their minds they returned to their homelands, relating what they had witnessed.

The Menderes government won the next election with a reduced majority. Eventually, it became less and less liked. In its latter years, it practically governed by decree. It grew its strength primarily from the expanding religious segment. At last, the military intervened with a coup, and on May 27, 1960, it was overthrown. We had just arrived in Beirut, Lebanon, aboard the Dutch freighter, 'Slamat'. The president, Celal Bayar, and the entire government, the parliamentarians of the Democrat party were all arrested and eventually tried by a military tribunal specially set up on a small island in the Marmara Sea. One of the issues that was brought to the trial were the notorious events of 6/7 September. It became crystal clear during

the court case that the provocation which stirred the mobs concerning the imaginary bomb placed at the house of Ataturk in Thessaloniki was a cock-and-bull story. It resulted in total calamity to the ethnic Greek minority in Istanbul. Menderes and two members of his government were condemned to death for other causes. They were hung on the island. Many others were sentenced to prison terms, but ultimately being amnestied. At the time, I personally wrote letters to a number of quarters outside of Turkey to prevent the death sentences. Others did the same, but to no avail. Amazingly, Menderes is now practically deified, particularly because of his extending a strong boost to the cause of religion in the country. Boulevards are named after him and Celal Bayar. In the ensuing years the country entered into a protracted period of turmoil with much bloodshed and a series of military coups. The Menderes legacy remains an issue to our very time. Religion alongside unremitting nationalism is the prominent feature of government and national politics.

Thomas Cosmades