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PARIS NOTES

By the Editor

UNREDEEMED GREECE IN ASIA MINOR. AN INTERVIEW WITH MR. KYRIAKOS P. TSOLAINOS.

ALONG the eastern shores of the Ægean Sea, stretching indeed from Nicomedia at the eastern tip-end of the Sea of Marmora and along the southern shores of that sea and the Dardanelles on the north, to the shores adjacent to the Island of Rhodes at the south, including such sandjaks or administrative areas as Nikea, Brussa, Balikesri, the independent governments of Ismid and of the Dardanelles, the regions around Magnesia, Smyrna, Aidin, Mentese, New Ephesus, Milassa, and Halicarnassus, is a section of unredeemed Greece about which there has been much discussion and no little dissension of opinion. Indeed, American experts, it is said in Paris, recently submitted a report adverse to the aspirations of the Greek inhabitants of this stretch and favorable to the Mohammedan Turks. The result has been one of those storm centers one becomes accustomed to around the Peace Conference. The following interview will be of interest to those who know something of the Turk's four and a half centuries of misrule in what was once called "Asiatic Greece."

Mr. Kyriakos Tsolainos was born in Smyrna, where he attended school and served several years as secretary to the President of the Christian College, and where he prepared for McGill University, Toronto, Canada. He graduated from McGill in May, 1918, after which he served for a time in the Department of Justice in Ottawa. He was registered in the department of Political Science at Columbia University as a candidate for his doctor's degree, when he was called to the service of the Greek delegation in Paris.

As a result of a number of conversations, I am able to report the following views of this interesting young Asiatic Greek, relative to the aspirations of the "Despised Rayahs" in those Mediterranean lands where sultan has succeeded sultan to Talaat and Enver. Readers of the *ADVOCATE* will read with attention his remarks relative to the attitude of American missionaries in that field. After this interview I learned that Colonel House had given to the Greek delegation the hope that the aspirations of the Greeks of Western Asia Minor were to be supported by Mr. Wilson in spite of the efforts of the missionaries and in spite of the report of the American committee of experts. As I leave Paris, Mr. Tsolainos and the other representatives of unredeemed Greece at the Peace Conference are consequently hopeful and happy.

To all who believe that Greece is the possession and inspiration of the world, that she has long been the sentinel of Europe at the gates of Asia, that her claims to the western litoral of Asia Minor are consonant with the twelfth of the famous fourteen points, which reads, "The other nationalities which are now under Turkish rule should be assured an undoubted security of life and an absolutely unmolested opportunity of autonomous development." to all such news of the possibility of a reunited Greece is glad news. For 3,000 years Smyrna has been Greek, called indeed by the Turks the "infidel

Smyrna." It was there that Homer sang, that Pindar gave to us many of his lyrics. It was reconquered by Alexander the Great. As has been said, "To separate Smyrna from Greece would be as cruel as to separate Nancy from France." But as we have seen, Smyrna is but one of a half dozen sandjaks in Western Asia Minor all with a large Greek population, and all with similar claims, claims which they bunch as the rights of unredeemed Greece. It is this aspiration which Mr. Tsolainos in his capacity as delegate from the United States and Canada to the Pan-Hellenic Conference of unredeemed Greeks at Paris represents. His statement follows:

"Another Greece shall arise,
And to remoter time
Bequeath like sunset to the skies
The splendor of her prime."

"These lines," said Mr. Tsolainos, "may be taken as the keynote to the tune which has inspired our life during the long five centuries of serfdom under the Turks. Every generation since the fateful year 1453 when 'Constantinople' the last rampart of Hellenism, fell before the Turk, has been brought up with the expectation that the day would come when that which was once Greece would again breathe the air of liberty and democracy. And for the realization of this, our national aspiration, we have paid a price which no other living race has paid. Our stamina and determination to stand true to the faith of our fathers and to re-establish our national state has no parallel in the history of the world.

"You know of course, Mr. Call, that we have lived in the territories which we claim today for three thousand years, and you know, too, that in spite of the Persian and the Roman invasions, Hellenism has been able not only to hold its own, but to conquer the Persian on the field of battle and to even impose its civilization upon Rome. After the third century the Eastern Roman Empire was called the Hellenic Empire. Need I review the titanic struggles which the Hellenic Empire had to fight singlehanded against all the invasions hailing from the East, and against Mohammedanism in particular? No student of history will deny that Hellenism, in its Byzantine form, fought the battle of civilization alone and unaided that Europe might be saved from the forces of darkness, that is to say from Mohammedanism. The fifteenth century found the Hellenic Empire exhausted owing to the continuous warfare which it was obliged to keep up. The Turks with their superior numbers and perfect military organization were hammering at the gates of Constantinople; and Europe forgetting its debt to Hellenism, abandoned the very race which had paid so dearly for the freedom of the world. Did Hellenism yield by compromising with the Turks? It could very well have done so. It could very well have allied itself with the Turks, saved what it could of the paternal soil and allowed them to go on with their plan to conquer Europe. The historians forget this as a rule, but it is a fact none the less worthy of notice. Hellenism, true to its ideals, preferred death rather than life which would remind it and its descendants of an action unworthy of its glorious past. And the world witnessed the last Emperor of the Greeks with his soldiers, paying the supreme sacrifice, dying that they might bequeath to the coming generations the splendor that was Greece.

"What sort of a life have we led under the Turks? We have suffered all the imaginable tortures of Turkish and Oriental cruelty and barbarity. In the countries which we call today Unredeemed Greece, we numbered formerly sixteen million people, whereas today we are only three million. Forced conversions to Mohammedanism, massacres, privations, and the terrible blood-tax, account for the difference in our numbers today. We were submitted to every sort of insult and torture because we would not deny our Christian faith or our adherence to our nationality. We have remained true to the faith of our fathers and to the voice of our national consciousness. We have worshiped our God in underground cellars. We have been able to recognize each other on the street only by signs and by wearing certain symbols, and not until, little by little, the Turks, having considered that they had killed enough of us and that the few who remained would be harmless, neglected to watch us closely, have we been able to do in the open what we were obliged to do secretly and timidly. Another factor has contributed to our safety. The Turks being a military people and both unable and unwilling to work, had to spare enough of us Christians to keep the country from starving. By the eighteenth century the power of the Turkish Empire was fast declining, and the Christian subjects were given more liberty in the matters of their religion and education. In the beginning of the nineteenth century, a small part of our paternal soil was liberated after a heroic struggle assisted by England, France, and Russia. Thus, in part, Greece was once more by her example inspiring the rest of the enslaved Christian nationalities to fight tyranny and oppression and to attain their liberty. But the greater part of Unredeemed Greece has remained to this day under the hoof of the Turk, and has continued to pay unsurpassed sacrifices for the sake of its national and religious ideals.

"Did Christian Europe help us at all? History answers that question. Instead of helping us, Europe has rather abandoned us to the Turkish yoke. The European chancelleries under the policy of the old political régime have vied in their efforts to secure the friendship of the Sultan, and the agonizing groan of the Christian "ayah," whom the Turk could massacre at his leisure, has been the voice of one crying in the wilderness. The principle of the "Balance of Power" was to the European chancelleries dearer than the fate of those who in their despair appealed to them in vain time after time for protection. Yes, indeed some sporadic efforts were planned, but they have never been executed by the mighty Christian Powers of the West. Now, at last, the day of judgment has come, and Unredeemed Greece on its knees prays thankfully to its God who in His great mercy and paternal love has brought about the day of its deliverance.

"You ask me to tell you what is our contribution to this last great war? I would reply that had we even no other claims by virtue of our long struggle and suffering during these five centuries, our contribution to the victory of the Allies would in itself constitute an undeniable claim to our liberty. I am of course speaking only of the effort of Unredeemed Greece, excluding that of the Hellenic Kingdom. Here is a brief statement of our contribution. At the beginning of the War the Germano-Turkish policy towards the Greeks of Turkey was to do away with them altogether. The Turks and the Germans knew very well that in the

Greeks they had a natural and uncompromising enemy. Hence the famous deportations were inaugurated in 1914 and half a million of our best people—the leaders of the communities and the most dangerous elements to the Turkish policy—were deported to Greece. They were obliged to leave behind them all that years of thrift and hard labor had enabled them to save. They were obliged to leave their paternal homes, the places where for generations their fathers and grandfathers had been born and brought up. Another 400,000 of our people were deported into the interior of Asia Minor, and of these barely one-third survives today. This last deportation was carried out in a very brutal way. Fathers were separated from their families and sent to one place, whereas mothers were sent to a different place and their whereabouts were unknown to the former. And if you ask me about the fate of the girls of our families I cannot tell you in an article which is to be published. Human conscience revolts at the idea that, in the twentieth century, womanhood could be feasted upon so brutally and that the passions of animal life could bring about the death of so many thousands of girls who were torn away from the arms of their mothers by force. What about the young men you say? Every Greek between the age of 18 and 45 was obliged to enlist in the Turkish Army, for the purpose of fighting for the cause of Turkey against his own brethren and against the English and the French. Have they done so? I cannot answer this question with a single word. Those of the conscripts who did not escape in time to leave Turkey for the purpose of enlisting with the Greek or Allied forces were of course obliged to wear the Turkish uniform. But we have more than one example of the great service which these men rendered to the Allies. Being in full sympathy with the cause of the Allies, which was the cause of their mother country, they would use the first opportunity to pass over to the camp of the Allies. Many thousands escaped from the Turkish camps and finally reached Salonica. The Turks and the Germans realizing the great danger of having such an element in their ranks finally sent most of the Greeks to other fronts than the Macedonian. The result is that we constituted a dangerous menace to the safety of the Turkish Army. About sixty thousand of our men were enlisted in the Macedonian army, and, may I remind you, about forty thousand of Unredeemed Greeks were fighting under the Stars and Stripes. In fact we had men fighting under every allied flag, and on every front. And we have accomplished all these in spite of the penalty of death which awaited us and our families had the Turks been victorious in this last Great War. Finally you have asked me what we mean by "our liberty." By this we mean nothing less, nothing else, than union with our Mother Greece. This idea and its realization has inspired us to suffer what we have suffered, and if there are still any obstacles preventing us from realizing this our one national aspiration, we are ever ready to continue struggling and fighting till the day comes when the breeze of liberty will fill every nook and corner of our fair land and there shall be no more foreign yoke or tutelage, but freedom under the ægis of which we shall be permitted—like the American people—to shape our own destiny as our national consciousness dictates and as our hearts have been looking forward to through these five long centuries.

"You also ask me to tell you the reason why I criticize

the missionaries in Turkey. Let me tell you, Mr. Call, that I have not the least doubt that if the good American people, these very people who contribute so lavishly to the missions in Turkey, if they knew the results following their contributions, I have not the least doubt, I say, that they would refuse to contribute another penny, at least until present conditions are quite changed. The subject is quite delicate, but you will permit me to state that I happen to know something about it, as I spent three years as a student in the International (Missionary) College of Smyrna and five years as the College President's private secretary, eight years altogether. I am not against the Missionaries as preachers of the gospel; as such they are welcomed. As educators they have rendered invaluable services to the Christian peoples in Turkey. But there is another aspect to the Missionary's program in Turkey. He is sent there by the good American people in order to convert the Mohammedans to Christianity, and not for the purpose of trying to convince the members of the other Christian churches to become Protestants. If their mission were really this last one, permit me to say that the money which has been spent for this purpose and the efforts put forth are not worth the results attained. Such a program befits the ecclesiastical policy of the Dark Ages rather than the twentieth century. Well then, some of the Missionaries who come to Turkey restrict their activity to educational work or medical work and as such they are both welcomed and respected by the people. Many of the Missionaries, however, after coming to Turkey and finding out that the Turkish Law prohibits by penalty of death any Mussulman from becoming a Christian, they take it upon themselves to channel their efforts towards getting members from the Greek Church. You see they have to justify their presence in our midst, and some of them feel that they have to send to Boston—their head office—reports about conversions to the true faith, at all hazards. With their stock slogan, "I have heard the call," they begin by attacking everything that the Greek Church believes or does, in order to persuade its members that they had better join the Protestant. Are they successful? Don't ask me, Mr. Call, ask the Missionaries. They would have to tell you that the Protestant Church in the District of Smyrna after a labor of about thirty years numbers about 200 Greek converts out of a Greek population of about 450,000 people. And who are these converts? With the exception of very few they are people who go to the Missionaries for comforts and sometimes for bread. That's all.

"The Missionary either wilfully ignores or is incapable of understanding, furthermore, the relation of Greek Nationality to Greek Church. For the Greek his Church means his Nation, and vice versa. It is his Church par excellence which has been for the Unredeemed Greek during the five centuries of slavery the center of his religious, political, and social life. His Church has been the good and loving mother which has preserved for him his national traditions, his language, and has made possible the continuity of his race.

"Is there another more wonderful example in the history of philology than that of the Greek language? Do you realize that from the time of Xenophon our written language has not changed as much as modern English has changed from the fourteenth century English? And to a very great extent we owe this to our church. Besides, our churchmen

have been our national heroes as well. It is our church, through one of its most distinguished bishops, that proclaimed to the Greek Nation in the beginning of the nineteenth century "Arise and attain your liberty." And it is our Patriarchate which organized our struggle for our independence in 1821. Is there another church which has sacrificed so many of its leaders for the liberty of a race? Even today our Patriarch, in spite of his old age, disregarding all the physical and political dangers, is in Paris in order to tell the mighty of the world about the justice of the aspirations of his children. In the face of such unquestionable services which our church has rendered to Hellenism, uniting our hearts and minds to her in an eternal bond of filial love and worship, you will understand. Mr. Call, how utterly useless it is for the Missionaries to try and persuade us that we had better renounce our national church and join other Christian sects. You see therefore why our people are not particularly fond of the Missionaries.

"The real reason, however, for which I criticise the Missionaries, their forgetfulness of their real mission and their failure to practice what they preach, is their standard towards the claims of Unredeemed Hellenism in this most critical and supreme moment in the history of our race. The American Missionaries in Korytza (Northern Epirus) are opposing the political aspirations of the inhabitants of that city and district. The American Missionaries in Asia Minor are doing all they can to prevent the realization of the national aspirations of Western Asia Minor. The American Missionaries in Constantinople are doing their utmost to convince the Peace Conference that the Sultan should remain in Constantinople. In fact the Missionaries have become the champions of the Turk, and, disregarding all that this race has done towards the misery and unhappiness of the world, they are now crusading for the preservation of the Turkish Empire as one State, quite as before the war, with the possible excuse that this Turkish State will be harmless in the future as it will be under European, or better still under American guardianship. In short, they have taken it upon themselves as the God's elect to decide for us our future, and not only for us but for the coming generations. People who have come to our country for educational purposes, or for preaching the gospel, just a handful of people, who are there as visitors, having lived there with the exception of very few, for only a few years, are now going to become indirectly our political masters and to take the place of the Turk.

"And what about the millions of the peoples to whom the country legitimately belongs? O they must have nothing to say. They are so much inferior to the enlightened Missionary that they must let him shape their political status and direct their national consciousness."

In a later article I hope to tell the readers of the *ADVOCATE* of my interview with the Cretan leader of the insurrection of 1897, Prime Minister of Greece, the "strongest man of the Peace Conference," Mr. Eleutherios Venizelos. But for the present I shall only add my belief in the justice of the claims of the Greek delegation, claims in behalf of over 1,180,000 Greeks against less than 1,050,000 Mohammedans, a population which should no longer be forced to continue under a rule which has during the war exterminated 300,000 of its members and driven into exile nearly 500,000 more.