PART I

00:00:19

My name is Dimitris Kamouzis, I am a historian and I work as a researcher for the Centre of Asian Minor Studies since 2010

(00:00:32)

I finished the dept. of Turkish Studies at the University of Cyprus and then I did my masters on Late Ottoman History and my PhD on Modern Greek History at King’s College London in the dept. of Byzantine and Mod Greek studies

(00:00:50)

and I focused on the history of the Greek orthodox populations from the mid 19th-century and in the C20 (0:59) specifically on the Greek orthodox minority of Istanbul

01:05

But I’ve also dealt with the issue of the violent displacement of Asia Minor Greeks from the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, on the establishment and settlement of the Greek refugees after 1923

01:24

and I’m also dealing with parts of the history of humanitarianism, esp. on refugee issues. (01:35)

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(01:52)

The starting point in order to examine the rising of nationalisms in the Ottoman Empire would be the Young Turn Revolution of 1908. (02:04) and the restoration of the constitution. 02:10

Initially the Revolution of YT was received with enthusiasm by both Muslims and non-Muslims of the empire because it finished a period of oppression and autocracy of Sultan Abdul Hamid (02:32) and therefore the restoration of the constitution was considered as the beginning of a new era of what would be the collaboration between Muslims and non-Muslims under a common Ottoman citizenship. A sort of, let’s say, Ottoman brotherhood. (02:49)

Nonetheless that quickly became an antagonism that presented itself within the Ottoman Parliament and the more the CUP identified Ottoman citizenship with Turkish ethnicity, and the more it leaned towards Turkish nationalism and became radicalized, something similar started to happen with the non-Muslim representatives of the *millets*, of the communities in the Ottoman Parliament (3:29) specifically Greek Orthodox, Armenians, Arabs, and the other non-Muslim populations living within the Empire.

03:44

In the case of the Greek Orthodox population this meant, more or less, also a kind of ethno-centric approach, political approach, which was supported by the Society of Constantinople, which was established right after the Young Turk Revolution by an officer of the Greek Army who was in Istanbul, Athanasios Souliotis-Nikolaides, and with the collaboration of a prominent member of a prominent Greek family in Istanbul, Ion Dragoumis.

04:21

The SoC more or less organized the middle class of Istanbul under an umbrella that had ethno-centric political orientations. And why the middle class? Because the middle class, a lot of them had been educated in Greece, in the U of Athens, they were, let’s say, the vehicle of secular, Greek-oriented culture. (04:58)

05:00

Things began to escalate from the Balkan Wars onwards, which for the CUP became the proof of what they considered the non-loyalty of non-Muslims to the vision they had for the Ottoman state. And from this point on, there was the adoption of Turkish Nationalism as the main ideology on the part of the Ottoman Govt was a clear political choice (05:42).
Which meant that at the same time there was a radicalization with regards to how the non-Muslim population responded to that. And we reach obviously the beginning of WWI in 1914 where things took a really violent turn. (06:07)

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*[Athens supporting radicalisation]*

07:48

The radicalization of Greeks in big urban centres, esp. in Istanbul and Smyrna (Constantinople and Smyrna), was indirectly supported by the big diplomatic authorities in the big cities. As I mentioned, Ion Dragoumis was a member of the Embassy in Istanbul and more or less the same approach was taken by the diplomatic authorities in Smyrna. This meant that it wasn’t an open support but obviously the policy of supporting the Ecumenical Patriarchate and the lay body – the permanent mixed council – of the Greek Orthodox *millet* in defending the privileges and the rights of the Orthodox Greeks was something that the Greek state was in favour of. (08:56) And this became apart also with the beginning of the Balkan Wars. Some say – and S/N definitely says that - the effort of the SoC to come into closer contact with the other non-Muslims and esp. the Bulgarians within the ottoman parliament could have functioned as a prelude towards what Greece actually did during the Balkan Wars. (09:32)

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 09:35

Another things that should be mentioned is that the CUP went out of power and then again restored its control over the Ottoman Empire with a 1913 coup d’ etat. So from this point onwards, the CUP became the dominant absolute power in the Ottoman empire. (10:00)

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*[Was Greek state arming the Rum population?]*

10:36

To the suggestion of the YT and the CUP that the Greek state was arming the Greek Orthodox population in Western Anatolia, I think… I wouldn’t support this notion even today. I think in a lot of cases (and we see that also when the Ecumenical Patriarchate demonstrates to the Porte and to the relevant Ministries about the economic boycotts or the persecutions of Orthodox Greeks in these areas) we see that in a lot of cases, one of the arguments used is that the populations in these places work as traitors against the Ottoman Govt or they collaborate with the Greek authorities or they’re being armed, but this was used mostly as a pretext to be able to justify, at least as far as I know, persecutions, displacements and so on, within a context of keeping an area secure. Within the context of security. (11:54)

But I wouldn’t agree with that notion, I don’ t think that that notion could be proved, at least historically, even seeing the Greek official documents – one could give one example: at some point there was the thought of S/N functioning as they functioned in Macedonia and arming the local population and we see that the govt – initially when S/N starts his activities in Istanbul – is very specific in saying “do not cause trouble, we do not want the situation to escalate in the Ottoman Empire within a violent path”. Therefore there is proof that the Greek govt even tried to avert cases where the population would be armed and would create clashes as a result of that political radicalisation. (13:04)

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*[The Economic Boycotts]*

14:21

One of the initial measures of the CUP and the organisations that were collaborating with the CUP to put pressure on the non-Muslim population of the Ottoman Empire and especially in the urban centres where the non-Muslim Greeks, Armenian, and Jews were holding most of the commerce and the financial sector, were the economic boycotts. (14:52)

The economic boycotts start around 1911. We have information in the diplomatic archive of the Greek MFA where there are specific reports on economic boycotts taking place in the area of Smyrna and the adjacent area, and the way it was done is that they would find shops or businesses owned by Greek subjects and they would begin by naming these shops, putting them also on the newspapers they controlled, and urging the Muslim population not to buy goods and products from these shops, not to collaborate with these merchants, businessmen and so on – and also there were threats against them in case they actually had any kind relations with these kinds of businesses. (16:04)

And that was an ongoing process, it didn’t stop there. The official demonstrations of the Patriarchate and also in the Black Book (Η Μαύρη Βίβλος), of the Patriarchate we see a lot of instances of economic boycott, including in Istanbul, where a lot of areas, more or less, where suffocated financially due to these boycotts. And it should be pointed out that these boycotts, specifically in Constantinople, in Istanbul, had a major impact during WWI. (16:42) Because yes, during WWI there were not violent persecutions in Istanbul due to the visibility of the city, but at the same time these economic boycotts more or less cripples the communities and made the already difficult financial conditions of WWI worse for the Greek Orthodox population of Istanbul. (17:08)

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17:25

The CUP pushed for this kind of economic structural violence against the non-Muslims of the big cities due to the fact that they believed that one of the ways that the Muslim population would be able to free itself from the financial control of the West and of the ways they could become Turks, that Turkism would eventually become the main ideology of the empire and also the main pillar of Turkish nation-building was to create a Turkish middle class. They believed that by creating a Turkish middle class, by taking control of the economy, would in a sense liberate other sections of Turkish society and give the confidence the Muslims-turning-Turks needed in order to be able to compete with the non-Muslims (18:42)

Therefore we see that the construction of the Turkish middle class became one of the main interests and main targets and main purposes of Turkish nation-building as it was designed by the CUP. (19:08) And this is why there is this kind of economic warfare, not open, but covert, structural, towards the non-Muslims of the empire, including the Greeks. (19:25)

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*[How did the CUP turn from liberator to oppressor of the Millets?]*

The transition of the CUP from liberator to oppressor needs to be explained on something that a lot of people don’t pay attention to, and it’s the fact that the Young Turks is not a monolithic movement. There are two powerful factions within the YT. The CUP and the Liberals. And they have a completely different understanding of what an Ottoman nation should be. The Liberals believe more in decentralisation, in providing or sustaining the autonomy of the non-Muslims and believe more in an “Ottoman citizenship” that would be open to different languages, cultures, doctrines, but would have as a main idea Ottomanism and that would be the umbrella that would encompass all the population of the Ottoman Empire, Muslims and non-Muslims. (21:20)

On the other hand, the CUP wanted to build a civic territorial nation. where the State would impose who is an Ottoman, there would be one language, religion would become irrelevant to citizenship and there would be a very strict secularisation of the state.

Obviously this political mentality, programme, clashes with what we would consider a multi-religious, a multi-cultural and a multi-ethnic society as it was based on the millet system. And the non-Muslims of the empire felt that these kind of policies where a violation of their own ethnic and religious autonomy within the context of the millet system. And this is where you have this mutual radicalisations: the more the CUP pushes for this reforms, the more the non-Muslims become radicalised and defensive. So in a sense, there are two ethnic nationalisms, one feeding off the other. (23:04)

So at some point I think that the CUP realises that the only way that they would be able to standardize and secularise who is an ottoman subject is by choosing the ones who were Muslims Turks and also the ones who could be Turkified Muslims. And this is what they do after the Balkans Wars. We see that most of the refugees who come from the lands that have been conquered by the Greeks and the Bulgarians during the Balkan Wars, they come to Turkey and we see that the CUP are trying to incorporate these Muslims into the revision of being a Muslim and a Turk.

Therefore I think after a point it becomes a very conscious choice of saying that this state cannot sustain non-Muslims if it is to survive as an Ottoman state. (24:23)

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PART II

 *[Souliotis-Nikolaidis & Ion Dragoumis]*

00:41

AS/N was an officer of the Greek army, he had a very active participation in the Macedonian struggle, and from this point on he’s sent in Istanbul in 1908, with an initial purpose to organise the population against what was considered at the time “the Slavic threat”. (1:05)

When he was in Istanbul thought, his presence coincided with the YT revolution and he became a very enthusiastic supporter of what would become, in his political vision, an Anatolian Empire, where the Greek element would hold a very prominent position.

(1:32)

At the same time, at the Embassy in Istanbul we have Ion Dragoumis, a member of a prominent political Greek family, who is serving there as a secretary in the Embassy, and the two men start discussing and collaborating on how this vision could become true.

(1:53) Dragoumis supported the whole idea because he was disappointed by the way the Greek state had failed to implement The Great Idea, the Megali Idea.

(2:03) The Great Idea is the core of Greek national ideology since Koletis coined the term and it talks about the liberation of the unredeemed Greeks and the annexation and the connection of these lands with Greece, which would become Greater Greece. So the creation of a Greece that would encompass all the populations still under Ottoman rule.

(02:43)

And in Dragoumis’ mind, he would support the vision of S/N but he would prefer a Greek empire, rather than an Anatolian empire where the Greeks have a prominent position. (02:59)

So what the two men did there was that they organised the Society of Constantinople, the SoC became the umbrella where all the ethnocentric circles -mostly from the middle classes- became member of SoC. Quickly the SoC started collaborating with the Ecumenical Patriarchate and Patriarch Joachim III. JIII was reluctant to collaborate with the Soc but what happened is the SoC supported JIII in his intra-church antagonism with the anti-Joachimist bloc, and this division was also translated in political terms, because you had Greek deputies in the Ottoman Parliement who were selected by the SoC and they would be called “Ethnikoi” (Nationals) and you’d have another faction, mostly lead by Pavlos Karolidis (and also with other members like Emmanouil Emmanouilides, Vassilios Orfanides and some others) who were called by the derogatory name “Antethnikoi” (Anti-Nationals).

(04:40)

So you have two lay/clerical factions: the Joachimists/Nationals and the anti-Joachimists/ anti-Nationals. (4:51)

Until the elections of 1913, the SoC and the Nationals controlled politically the Greek Orthodox *millet*. Nonetheless the loss of the Nationals in the elections of 1913, the death of Patriarch Joachim III, and the beginning of the Balken Wars, bring that era to an end and Patriarch Germanos and anti-Joachimists (and anti-Nationals) who gain control of power within the Greek orthodox *millet.* (5:35)

It’s significant to say that all the 1914 Parliament were elected with the CUP.

And from this point on, there’s an uneasy relationship built between the Patriarchate and the CUP

(5:58)
Joachim tries to deal with the persecutions of Greeks in an indirect way, in a behind-the-scenes way, and he is later accused of not being active enough during these persecutions, which is more or less his fall after the signing of the armistice of Moudros, in late 1918 – there is a coup within the *millet* and they bring him down – and at the same time there is this kind of relationship where he’s trying in a sense to follow a very conservative policy and to deal indirectly with what is happening and at the same time thought, the state supports him in the intra-ecclesiastical struggle. So there’s this unease relationship between Germanos, the patriarchate and the CUP.

(06:57)

And obviously you have Greek deputies who could be divided in 3 categories in the period 1914-1918: there are those who openly spoke in the Ottoman Parliament against these persecutions, one of them is Emmanouilides – but his reactions find a lot of resistance and, sometimes, open threats within and outside the Parliament; there are the ones who chose the path of self-censorship, so they don’t say anything because they’re afraid of the consequences of speaking openly against the CUP; and there are some, the most famous of which is Vassilios Orfanidis, who was an ardent Unionist, and they support openly the policies of the CUP and he becomes more or less the liaison between the Patriarchate and the CUP (08:05)

This things changes during 1919-1922, when you again have the people coming to power the supporters of Greek irredentism, basically the Nationalists/Joachimists, and the interesting thing is that right after the collapse of the Asia-Minor front and the Asia Minor Catastrophe, the supporters of Greek irredentism, who were also Venizelists, flee to Greece , and the ones who try to come again to power are the old anti-Joachimists – and one of the is Orfanides, who again becomes a very prominent member of the community. (08:55) […]

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*[Emmanouil Emmanouilides]*

11:55

We should also mention that the people who were part of let’s say this more conservative group, like Karolides, Emmanouilides, had very specific characteristics. Esp. Emmanouilides… Most of them are Karamanli: so they are Turkish-speaking, they’re more able to communicate with the Muslim-Turkish population, so they come from Cappadocia, so they come from an area where they have maybe a better understanding of Muslim Turks. Which makes it interesting because in a sense they function also as a bridge of Muslims and non-Muslims in the Ottoman Parliament. (12:49)

But at the same time Emm’s case is very interesting because he’s a deputy of that region that covers also Foça/Phokaia, and he’s among the people who actually demand some kind of explanations within the Ottoman Parliament for the atrocities that took place in 1914. (13:18)

And what’s more interesting is that he continues to have this kind of stance of supporting the claims of the Greek Orthodox population with regards to the persecutions they’ve been under the CUP, although he is alected with the CUP. And what’s more interesting is the fact that after 1918, he is among these deputies who actually demonstrate in a written form against the Porte and they ask for the recognition of these atrocities during WWI.

14:15

Furthermore, when he comes to Greece he collaborates on several issues with Venizelos.

14:24

Therefore we see that there is a trajectory of these people which should not be seen as black and white. These people make political choices within the context they function –and some lean clearly and support the choices of the CUP, like Orfanides– but others take a different stance despite the fact that they are Members of Parliament elected with the CUP. (14:58)

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*[1914]*

15:46

1914 is a sense the culmination is a very conscious political choice which is to – how would we put it?- to neutralise and take out of the picture the non-Muslim population of the empire.

It’s a conscious political choice, the war allows later on the CUP to be able to do that in a very radical manner (and I’m referring to the case of the Armenians of the Empire and their extermination, the Armenian Genocide) and in a sense what we see in 1914 is a prelude of what will take place against the Armenian population. What is interesting and could be claimed is that perhaps the Greek Orthdox population could have found the same fate with the Armenians. But there are 2-3 factors that in a sense salvaged the Ottoman Greeks:

One is, the existence of the Greek state. So the existence of an external protector, a state that would be able to monitor or demonstrate with regards to violent persecutions and extermination and ethnic cleansing like the ones imposed upon the Armenian population, made the CUP from actually exterminating the Ottoman Greeks.

The second thing is that some sources may claim that Patriarch Germanos was passive, but at the same time an argument could be made that if he was as assertive as the Armenian patriarch , the response of the authorities could be much harsher. Therefore someone could claim that partly that this passive policy at the same time protected his flock from a worse fate.

The third factor is the fact that from the moment the extermination of the Armenians started becoming known by Western sources, it could not be repeated against another section of the non-Muslim population.

But someone seeing the events in Foça, seeing the economic boycotts, and seeing also other events in 1913, 1914 against the Ottoman Greeks could claim that the ottoman Greeks were also targeted for a broader extermination, for broader persecutions. It just happened that, for the reasons I mentioned, it was the Armenians who received this immense wave of violence.