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**INTERNATIONAL LAW AND MINORITY PROTECTION: THE FATE
OF THE GREEKS OF IMBROS AND TENEDOS**

- Our story begins with the closing phase of the “Eastern Question” that started with the Balkan Wars and ended with the July 1923 Treaty of Lausanne.
- The events that transpired in this period involve great power rivalries; foreign interference in the politics of smaller strategic states as Greece; domestic political rivalries and external dependence.
- With the outbreak of the Balkan Wars, in October 1912, the Greek Navy conquered most of the Aegean Islands, including Limnos, Thasos, Samothrace, Imbros and Tenedos, islands with Greek populations since antiquity.
- The draconian Treaty of Sevres (August 20, 1920) was imposed on defeated Turkey, but never ratified. It granted Imbros and Tenedos, at the entrance to the Dardanelles, to Greece.
- The July 1923 Lausanne Treaty replaced and revised the Treaty of Sevres and restored (for strategic reasons) Imbros and Tenedos to Turkey.
- The Lausanne Treaty, a landmark treaty, became the foundation of peace in the region after a decade of war. It marked the death of the “Megali Idea”; it settled territorial issues; Turkey gave up claims to territories as Cyprus; it rebuilt an ethnically cohesive Greece and Turkey, following massive population exchanges; conferred significant rights to non-Muslim religious minorities inhabiting Turkey;

- conferred specific rights on the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Istanbul; conferred explicit legal and political rights to the Greeks of Imbros and Tenedos who were exempted from the population exchange provisions of the Treaty.
- What followed the signing of the Lausanne Treaty is a classic case of Turkey's disregard and violation of its international legal obligations, capitalizing on the international community's failure to uphold international law and the timidity of Greece.
 - Please note the parallels between the fate of the Greeks of Imbros and Tenedos and that of the occupied areas of Cyprus.

Imbros and Tenedos at the time of Lausanne

- Imbros (Gokceada): 300 sq. km; No Turkish population; 6762 Greek with 10 schools and 1385 students.
 - Tenedos (Bozcaada): 39.5 sq.km; very small number of Turks; 1631 Greeks; 2 schools with 450 students.
 - TODAY: NO Greeks in Tenedos, under 200 in Imbros, and NO schools!
 - Under the Lausanne Treaty, articles 37-44 define Turkey's obligations toward its non-Muslim minorities. These treaty provisions were also endorsed and placed under the guarantee of the League of Nations on September 24, 1923.
 - Under international law the UN is the legal successor of the League of Nations.
 - ARTICLE 14 of the Lausanne Treaty, is THE critical article for the Greeks of Imbros and Tenedos. While the islands are under Turkish sovereignty, the article contains fundamental and specific provisions for the survival of this Hellenic population.
- Specific Provisions: a special administrative organization for local government elected and staffed by local persons; full guarantees of political and religious rights; full protection of

persons and property; a police force drawn from the local population and under the control of the local administration; full control and management of educational institutions.

The Ethnic Cleansing of Imbros and Tenedos:

--Note the similarity to what happened in occupied Cyprus.

- Intimidation;
- Expulsion;
- Property confiscation and expropriation;
- Denial of educational and religious rights;
- Settlers and demographic change;
- Destruction of cultural heritage (religious and historical monuments).

Examples of major violations of article 14 of the Lausanne Treaty :

Before the ink dried on the Lausanne Treaty, the violations of its provisions started!

September 1923: local elected councils and administrators fired and replaced by Turkish mainland bureaucrats;

In Tenedos and Imbros 64 individuals and their families, the elite of the islands, declared “undesirable” and expelled because they were not considered “loyal” to Turkey;

Many from Imbros, fearing similar fate, temporarily flee to Limnos and Thessaloniki. Despite the amnesty provisions (Protocol 8) of the Lausanne Treaty, they are

not allowed to return to the islands while their properties are confiscated as “abandoned”!

By 1925: Colonization begins with Turkish settlers some of whom are Turks from Crete and Epirus.

1926: Under new conscription law Greek males drafted in the Turkish Army and sent to Eastern Anatolia for hard labor projects (road construction, etc.).

1927: The Prefect of the Dardanelles visits Imbros to investigate why Imbriots from Glykos asked their kin living in the US for economic support for their schools. Consequently, local leaders are arrested and jailed on the mainland for “offending Turkism.”

1927 and Administrative Law 1151:

Its sweeping provisions reduce the status of the local administration; close local courts; appoint all Turkish administrators violating the electoral provisions of the Lausanne Treaty; all police comes from the Turkish mainland; Greeks failing Turkish language fluency cannot serve in any administrative capacity; introduction of the Turkish school curriculum; teaching of Greek and religion reduced to one hour per day outside the regular curriculum; teachers must be certified in Ankara and able to teach Turkism and Kemalism.

With these provisions, parents who could afford to send their children to Greece do so, with all ensuing complications...

The Temporary Reprieve (1950-1963):

With the improvement in Greek-Turkish relations in the early 1950's, conditions improve on both islands.

- The status of local administration upgraded so that residents do not have to travel to the Turkish mainland for minor administrative and judicial matters.
- Schools granted the same status as the minority schools in Istanbul, while Greek teachers from Istanbul can teach in these schools.
- President Celal Bayar visits Imbros in 1951 and promises personal attention to local grievances.
- Local communities allowed to receive assistance from their overseas communities and public assistance is granted for the building of a hospital and expand fishing. Tourism is also encouraged.

The Return of Repression 1964/65 and Beyond:

As the Cyprus issue takes prominence, it has an immediate impact on the Greeks of Imbros and Tenedos, much as it did on the remaining Greeks of Istanbul.

The new measures continue the violations of the Lausanne Treaty.

- 1965: A Turkish boarding school opens in Panayia, the capital of Imbros, with 800 student teachers.
- A police camp and academy opens in Panayia and regular army units open camps at Glyki.
- 3,000 Turks from Bulgaria and the Laz region of the Black Sea are brought in as settlers and given local land for settlement.
- The education law of 1951 is suspended and the schools come under the 1927 regulations that violate the Lausanne Treaty.
- Teaching of Greek in the public schools ended.

- Takeover of all Greek schools. The Imbros Junior High School becomes a boarding school for Turkish students from the mainland.
- Minority schools on Tenedos closed in 1964.
- 2,000 acres expropriated for the creation of an open agricultural jail for criminals serving major sentences for serious crimes! These criminals are free to move around the community of Schoinoudia! Their violence and terror drives Imbriots from their homes in search of safety.
- 1966: Prime agricultural land expropriated under eminent domain at minimal prices and no appeal of the financial settlement. Some 8,000 acres go for the construction of a dam, while 11,000 acres of grazing land are closed for “reforestation.” Shepherds are forced to sell their flocks (44,500 sheep and goats) to mainlanders for a minimum price. With loss of livelihood, Imbriots forced to migrate.
- Jailing of local leaders who complained to the Greek Ambassador who was allowed to visit Imbros. Jailed for insulting Turkey.

THE RESULT:

By the late 80’s Imbros had over 8,000 Turks living there, in addition to military and police. Only some 200 elderly Greeks remain today. On Tenedos there are no Greeks, while the island is settled by more than 2,000 Turks, plus police, etc.

WHAT GREECE DID/DID NOT DO:

- Greece never asked to open a Consular office on the islands. In contrast, Turkey maintains a consular office in Rhodes, even though there is only a very small number of Turks on Rhodes and Kos.

- The Greek Foreign Ministry filed formal complaints in 1924, 1925, and in 1964 with its Turkish counterpart over the violations of the Lausanne Treaty. The Greek complaints had no effect.
- Greece brought the matter to Britain, a major signatory of the Lausanne Treaty. The British responded (in the mid-20's) that they were "watching the situation." No action taken by the League of Nations Council in 1924 under article 4 of the Lausanne Treaty. No action taken because of great power politics and rivalries.
- Appeal to UNESCO in 1964 leads to a call on both Greece and Turkey (!) to "take all necessary measures to provide minority education..."
- Greek protest to the NATO Secretary-General in 1964 leads nowhere. Under American pressure (Cold War) Greece cancels plans to appeal to the International Court of Justice and to the European Commission of Human Rights.

What can be done now:

- Turkey is engaged in EU accession talks. One of the conditions is that it must meet ALL human rights provisions of European law (European Convention in particular).
- What legal recourses are available:
 - a) Interstate application under the European Convention.
 - b) Individual Appeals to the European Court of Human Rights over denial of property rights; discrimination (article 14 of the European Convention//article 21 of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights) because of national origin, language and religion.

c) A recourse to the International Court of Justice, the successor organization of the PCIJ of the League of Nations.

NOTE: under the Lausanne Treaty, Turkey's consent is not required for filing an appeal, nor is a "compromis" (jointly drafted by the litigants) required as in the normal cases filed in the Court. Under article 44 of the Lausanne Treaty, any differences over the implementation or interpretation of the minority provisions become a matter of adjudication and can be brought directly to the PCIJ (now the ICJ).

Why the Official Lack of Action and/or Reluctance on the Part of Greece:

- Fear that state or individual appeals may disrupt on-going Greco-Turkish dialogue.
- Fear of international apathy and/or reluctance to be involved in an "old" problem that may complicate current strategic considerations.
- Concern that Turkey may raise parallel issues including the demilitarization of the Aegean islands; the Turkish minority in Rhodes; issues re. the Muslims of Thrace.

The response to these fears:

The Lausanne Treaty provisions re. the minorities in Istanbul, Imbros, Tenedos, and the Ecumenical Patriarchate are explicit and are not linked to the demilitarization provisions of the Aegean islands.

If the Republic of Greece, for political reasons, chooses not to follow a legal challenge, it should not discourage individuals from filing cases in the European Court of Human Rights. We already have cases emerging from property issues of Istanbul Greeks.

In Conclusion:

Greek timidity and international apathy have allowed Turkey to uproot and destroy another historic Greek community. At a time of sensitivity to human rights and the availability of remedial instruments in Europe, Turkey must be held accountable for its documented violations of international law and Treaty obligations.

A Greek American note:

Our connection to this issue is not only the presence of Greek-Americans of Imbriot roots, particularly in New York, but also the late Archbishop Iakovos who came from Imbros. It should also be remembered that Ecumenical Patriarch Demetrios, who succeeded Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras, had also served as Archbishop of Imbros and Tenedos prior to his selection as Ecumenical Patriarch.

A bibliographic note:

There is a wealth of material on this period.

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