

THOUGHTS IN THE AFTERMATH OF EARTHQUAKE IN TURKEY

The calamity occurred in the areas of the Republic of Turkey which coincide with the hellenistic kingdoms of Kommagene and Osroene, in historic northern Syria. These areas in modern times used to have a mixed population, predominantly Turkish, with sizable Armenian, Arab, Kurdish, Assyrian and Yezidi minorities. The affected area lies astride the river Euphrates and crossing the international frontier of the Lausanne Treaty (1923) encompasses the north western parts of the Arab Republic of Syria.

Thriving communities in Iskenderun (Alexandretta), Gaziantep, Maras, Urfa (Edessa), have been dislocated. The same holds true for the Syrian towns of Lattakia (Laodikeia) and Aleppo, already devastated by the civil war.

There is no anticipation of Turkey's hold on the affected districts, becoming tenuous, even in the province of Hatay, where Antakya (Antioch) lies, the historic see of the Orthodox Patriarchate of Antiocheia, based nowadays in Damascus.

Lebanon, Cyprus, Israel might be struck by earthquakes following yesterday's mother of all calamities.

For a while, minds feel the impotence vis a vis nature and all people in the eastern extremity of the Mediterranean face the same evil. For a while, political antagonism and conflict will abate.

Greece is carrying out her humanitarian (and Christian) duty by assisting the suffering populations in Turkey. STRAVON wishes the Greek assistance mission good luck and success. Humanitarian assistance to Syria will not procrastinate.

Politically speaking, ahead of elections in Turkey, there should be no illusion that a repetition of 1999 "earthquake diplomacy" is possible. Greece, on her part, will pursue her objectives in the Libyan sea, ideally in dialogue with a government in Tripoli, in consultation with Egypt. Yet, restart of dialogue with Ankara no matter the elections is entirely possible, provided that the earthquake and the foreseen series of new tremors would not give President Erdogan the credible excuse to postpone the electoral process.

Last but not least, the earthquake has also highlighted the vulnerability of Akkuyu nuclear power plant, due to start operation later this year in area with seismic activity, 400 kms west of Gaziantep, but less than 50 miles from the coast of Cyprus.

Stravo of Amaseia
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