

Submitted by
Councillor Jim Karygiannis

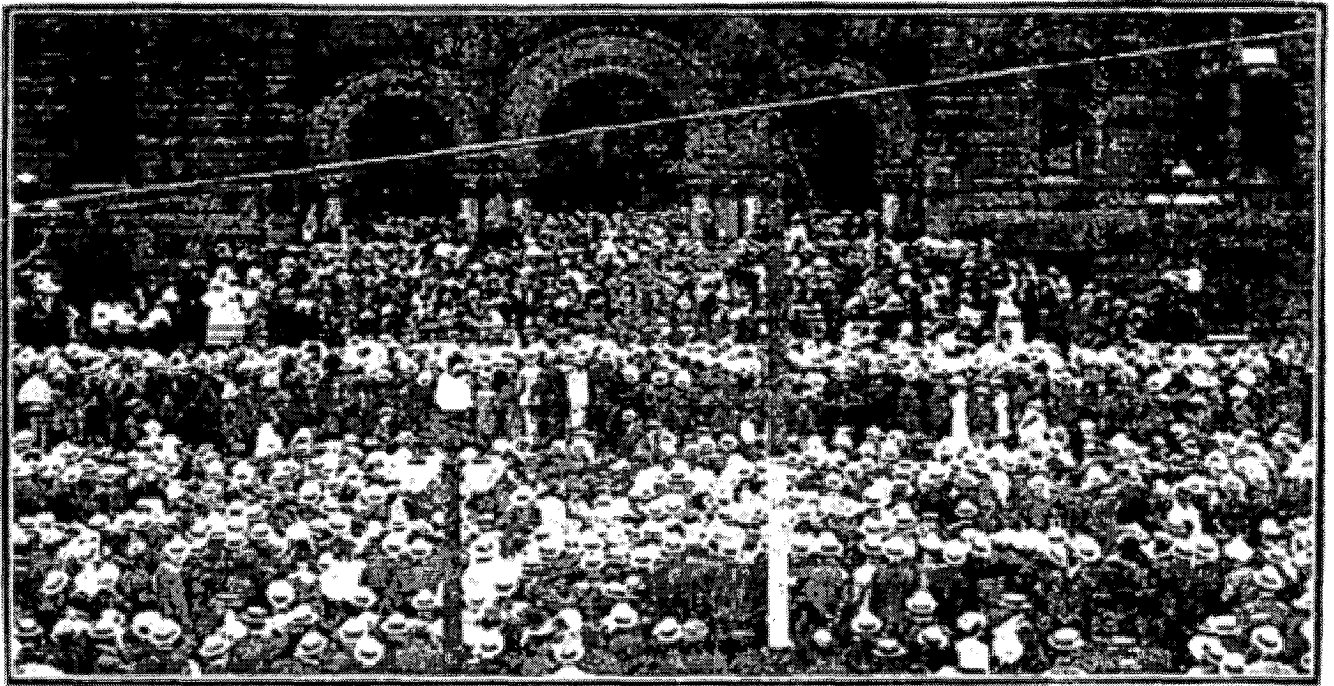
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Toronto World, June 15, 1918

At home frustration boiled over into violence in the early days of August, 1918. Returning veterans hated "slackers" and aimed their rage at foreigners. Some minorities, such as Greek immigrants, had not endured the horrors of the trenches since their home country was neutral. They stayed in Canada and were seen to prosper while "true patriot sons" of Canada died. The pervasive racism of Canada in that era could and did erupt in violence from time to time. Immigrants were obvious and easy targets. The unselfconscious racism of the times is reflected widely in the literature and newspapers.

In connection with the library the very valuable historical collection of drawings and paintings made by Mr. John Ross Robertson, which is on exhibition free to visitors on the main floor of the reference library, attracted 12,642 persons. In times that are as historic as any the British race has seen a collection of this kind will kindle the finest instincts and the highest patriotism in those who visit it and give it study.

The Toronto World, Jan. 30, 1915



MAYOR CHURCH READS ANTI-RIOT PROCLAMATION TO CITIZENS.

Photograph of an historic scene in front of the City Hall at noon to-day when a proclamation calling on the citizens to maintain order, was read by the Mayor. Thousands of those who were present believe that the Riot Act was being read, according to an announcement made by Mayor Church last night. Instead, an appeal to the citizens to refrain from demonstrations was made which, however, declared that the Riot Act will be read in the event of any future disturbances.

Mayor Thomas Church issues anti-riot proclamation. *Toronto Star*, August 7, 1918.

Fight With Policeman.

The corner of Broadview avenue and Queen street last night was the scene of another outbreak. At 10.30 o'clock P.M. Mitchell, who was on duty at that corner, thought the actions of Clifford Barker, a returned soldier, merited the latter's arrest and attempted to take him into custody. Whether the veteran resisted from the outset or not is a matter on which witnesses differ, a number stating that he made no effort against the policeman until he was violently shaken around. The culmination of the attempted arrest was that Barker assaulted the constable, and the latter bore marks of the encounter on his face when it had finished. Twenty policemen from No. 8 Station were rushed to the scene and took Barker into custody without further disturbance. In the meantime a large crowd gathered which had to be dispersed. Several Greek restaurant proprietors turned out the lights of their places and locked them up at the outset. Then they stood in front of their stores, evidently fearing an attack, but nothing further developed. The police put a strong patrol out in that section.

The firemen were called out last

Anti-Greek Riots, Broadview and Gerrard, *Globe*, Aug. 6, 1918

In August, 1918, what came to be known as the "Greek Restaurant Riot" or the "1918 Anti-Greek Riots" saw thousands of veterans pouring onto Yonge Street and other city streets to loot and burn Greek-owned businesses. They fought pitched battles with the police on Toronto's streets. (See Thomas W. Gallant, Michael Vitopoulos, George Treheles, *The 1918 Anti-Greek Riot in Toronto*, Toronto: Thessalonikeans Society of Metro Toronto, 2005). They even assaulted a policeman at Broadview and Gerrard.

1918 Toronto anti-Greek riot

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

The **1918 Toronto anti-Greek riot** was a series of violent events in Toronto, Ontario, Canada targeting Greek immigrants during August 2-4, 1918. (Some sources indicate the date range August 1-5, to include the event that triggered the violence and the date of the final restoration of the peace.) It was the largest riot in the city's history and one of the largest anti-Greek riots in the world. In the newspapers of the time the events were referred to as the **Toronto troubles**.^{[1][2][3]} The riots were the result of prejudice against new immigrants and the belief that Greeks did not fight in World War I^[2] and that they were pro-German.^[4]

The riots were triggered by the news about the expulsion of a crippled veteran from the White City Café by Greek waiters on Thursday evening, August 1. The violence started on Friday, August 2, when crowds of estimated 5,000-20,000 led by World War I army veterans destroyed every Greek business in sight in the city center, while the overwhelmed police could not prevent this. Because of the scope of the violence, the city mayor had to invoke the Riot Act to call in the militia and military police.^[2] On Saturday night, the police and militia was engaged in fierce battles in the downtown in an effort to quench the violence. In total, an estimated 50,000 on both sides took part in the riot. Over 20 restaurants were attacked, with damages estimated over \$1,000,000 in modern (as of 2010) values.^{[1][2]}

Anti-Greek Riots Rock City

August 02, 1918
433 Yonge Street

PRINT
this story

On a summer weekend late in the First World War, Toronto's small Greek community became the victim of the anger and resentment of returning veterans who felt they'd been displaced. Many resented the men they saw as "slackers"—those who hadn't served. Inflamed by latent anti-immigrant sentiments, they took out their rage in a weekend of rioting.



War veterans protest in Toronto, c 1918 (public domain).

Private Claude Cludernay, crippled in the war, had dinner at the Greek-owned White City Café at 433 Yonge Street on August 1. Though usually friendly, Cludernay was drunk and belligerent and struck a waiter, who ejected him and called police.

The small event sparked indignation, and from August 2-5 mobs of veterans and civilians—up to 50,000 in all—marched Toronto's streets, looting and destroying Greek businesses. When peace was restored on August 5, more than 150 rioters were hurt or hospitalized; 25 were arrested; 16 police officers were injured, 10 seriously; and damage to Greek property amounted to over \$100,000 (equivalent to \$1.25 million today).

Although Greece was neutral for most of the war, Canada did not recruit Greek-Canadians, fearing they would side with Germany. Soldiers viewed those who hadn't served with contempt. However, the riots were as much an outcome of locality as they were of politics. Many veterans lived in the area bounded by Jarvis, Yonge, Carleton and Dundas streets, also home to most of Toronto's Greek population and their businesses. They were a highly visible target. Compounding events, a congress of the Great War Veterans Association was scheduled for August 2. Tens of thousands of veterans were in Toronto, teeming with their grievances, ready to lay blame.

By Laura Bonikowsky

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Yonge Street north from King Street, c 1911, the site of much of the damage during the 1918 Anti-Greek Riot (courtesy City of Toronto Archives/Fonds 200, Series 372, Subseries 100, Item 239).

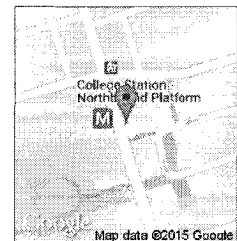
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1918 Toronto anti-Greek riot

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References

- Violent August: The 1918 Anti-Greek Riots in Toronto*. (<http://violentaugust.com/>), a *Burgeoning Communications* Inc. documentary produced, written and directed by John Burry
- Thomas Gallant, George Treheles and Michael Vitopoulos, *The 1918 Anti-Greek Riot in Toronto*, Thessalonikeans Society of Metro Toronto, 2005, ISBN 0968051537 (a summary (<http://www.arts.yorku.ca/hist/tgallant/documents/synopsis.pdf>))
- YFile: York's Daily Bulletin. *1918 anti-Greek riot a dark episode in Toronto's history*. (<http://www.yorku.ca/yfile/archive/index.asp?Article=3476>) Friday October 22, 2004.
- Encyclopedia of Canada's Peoples* , p. 624 (<https://books.google.com/books?id=dbUuX0mnvQMC&pg=PA624>)

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Categories: Persecution of Greeks | Pogroms | Canadian people of Greek descent | 1918 in Ontario
History of Toronto

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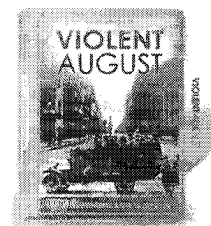
THE 1918 ANTI-GREEK RIOTS IN TORONTO

August 2nd, 1918 - Toronto, ON

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For a detailed account of the riots, you may be interested in **The 1918 Anti-Greek Riot in Toronto** by *Professor Thomas Gallant, George Treheles and Michael Vitopoulos.*

For copies, contact:

June Samaras
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 (For Books about Greece)
 2020 Old Station Rd
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"Violent August is a triumph in its revelation of the Toronto Greek experience. Teachable moments on the politics of war and the effects of anti-immigrant racism makes this documentary required viewing for all who truly want to understand the other side of the Canadian experience"

★★★★★

John Dash T-Mak World

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CREDITS

Violent August: The 1918 Anti-Greek Riots in Toronto.
 A Burgeoning Communications Inc. Documentary Film.

Produced, Written and Directed by: **John Burry** These perplexing questions are answered in a new one-hour TV documentary, **Violent August: The 1918 Anti-Greek Riots in Toronto.**

Associate Producer:
Lynne Thorogood-Burry

Edited by: **Pete Raelboom**
 (Visual Fixations)

FEATURING

Prof. Thomas Gallant,
 Chair, Modern Greek History, University of California San Diego

Prof. Yiorgios Anagnostou,
 Associate Professor, Modern Greek and American Ethnic Studies, Ohio State University
[view website](#)

J.L. Granatstein
 celebrated author and military historian.

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TORONTO, Ontario — On a hot August night, not all that long ago – and for the next four consecutive nights – the good citizens of Toronto went crazy and ignited the largest riot in the city's history – and one of the largest anti-Greek riots in the world.

On Friday August 1, 1918, approximately 20,000 soldiers and civilians attacked, looted and destroyed every Greek restaurant they could find – while police and militia, overwhelmed by the violence, just stood by and watched.

On Saturday night, however, the police struck back. Fired by vengeance and adrenaline, they raged through the city's streets with clubs and whips striking out indiscriminately. An estimated 50,000 rioters, civilians and police waged furious battles for hours in the city's downtown core. Hundreds were injured, including innocent women and children, and damages, in today's values, totaled more than \$1,000,000.

— WHY DID IT HAPPEN? —

Why the Greeks? What were the consequences? Why, until now, has this incredible incident been forgotten?



Incorporating detailed interviews with historians and family members of those affected, the documentary explores the causes of the riot and chronicles the violent events in detail – using actual archival photos, newspaper reports and representational newsreel footage to bring the people, places and incidents to life.

Violent August provides a balanced view of the riots, examining the social conditions and motives of the enraged World War I veterans who initiated the riots and the situation surrounding the small community of Greek immigrants and restaurant-operators who unwittingly became the lightning rod for the violence.

The film provides a powerful and shocking picture of how a festering climate of racism and resentment became a ticking time bomb primed to explode at the slightest provocation.

Copies available in English, and English with Greek subtitles for \$18.95 plus applicable taxes and postage.

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