



Douglas S. Freeman High School Model United Nations Conference

The Siege of Constantinople

Dossier

Byzantine Officials:

Constantine XI Palaeologus, *Emperor of The Byzantine Empire*

Constantine XI Palaeologus, considered a man of courage and energy, was the last Byzantine emperor. His reign lasted from 1449 to 1453. During the siege, he utilized everything in his power to defend his city from Ottoman attack and garner the support of the West.

Thomas Palaeologus, *Despot of the Morea*

Thomas Palaeologus was appointed as the Despot of Morea in 1428 by his older brother, John VIII Palaeologus, holding the title until 1465, five years after the fall of the despotate in 1460.

Demetrius Palaeologus, *Despot of the Morea*

Brother to Thomas Palaeologus, Demetrius served on the despotate of Morea alongside Thomas from 1449 to 1460. He struggled to cooperate with his brothers, especially Constantine, due to a desire to rise as the new Byzantine emperor, causing him to side with the Ottomans.

Catherine Zaccaria, *Byzantine Empress Consort*

Catherine Zaccaria was betrothed to Thomas Palaeologus in 1429 and married him in Mystras in 1430, serving as his consort until the Ottoman conquest of Morea in 1460.

Jacob Notaras, *Byzantine Aristocrat*

As the youngest son of Loukas Notaras, the Byzantine navy commander, Jacob was an affluent aristocrat from Constantinople and served as grand admiral to the last Byzantine emperors. He was only 14 years old when the Ottomans seized the Byzantine Empire, catching the attention of Sultan Mehmed II.

George Sphrantzes, *Byzantine Historian & Diplomat*

George Sphrantzes was a great logothete, or chancellor, of Constantinople before the Ottoman attack, fleeing to different regions until finally settling in Corfu and beginning a monastic life. He is renowned for writing a chronicle covering 1413-1477, in which he discussed the last years of the Palaeologi in Constantinople and displayed a marked aversion to the Ottomans and Latins.

Anna Notaras, *Daughter of Byzantine Navy Commander*

Anna Notaras, older sister of Jacob Notaras, left Constantinople prior to 1453. After arriving in Italy in 1459, she made claim to the Notaras family inheritance, disinheriting her brother because of his decision to convert to Islam while in captivity.

Foreign Parties:

Frederick III, *Holy Roman Emperor*

Frederick III was the Holy Roman Emperor from 1452 - and German King from 1440 - to 1493. For much of his reign, he was unable to pacify the eastern borders of the Holy Roman Empire, including the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople in 1453.

Girolamo Minotto, *Bailo of Constantinople*

Coming from a patrician family, Girolamo Minotto was elected Bailo of Constantinople in the place of Arsenio Diedo in 1450. He played an essential role in leading the Venetians during the siege of Constantinople and was primarily responsible for protecting the land walls.

Ladislaus the Posthumous, *Hungarian Boy King*

Ladislaus the Posthumous, also known as Ladislaus V, was a boy king of Hungary and of Bohemia (beginning in 1453) from 1444 to 1457.

Joan de la Via, *Catalan Consul*

Joan de la Via was a merchant and shipmaster and a citizen of Genoa and Barcelona, serving as the last consul of the Catalans in Constantinople. On May 29, 1453, during the fall of Constantinople, he defended a tower near the Hippodrome, most likely the Bykanon tower.

Orban, *Hungarian Gunsmith*

An iron founder and engineer from Transylvania in the Kingdom of Hungary, Orban cast large-scale artillery, including an immense cannon, to defend the Byzantines against the Ottoman siege of Constantinople.

Jacopo Tedaldi, *Florentine Merchant*

He was a key witness to the Fall of Constantinople in 1453. His job as a merchant was in Constantinople because the entire city was the center of the Byzantines, who controlled all trade between Europe and Africa. Merchants like Jacopo abandoned the Silk Road around the time of the fall and were asked to fight within the walls of Constantinople.

Nicoló Barbaro, *Venetian Nobleman*

He was a valued nobleman at the time of the fall on May 29, and he was able to help the wounded soldiers and innocents medically during the attack. He was a strategist who could offer insight despite the chaos, which he kept in writing alongside coordinating many of the attacks and his strategies and findings.

Leonard of Chios, *Greek Scholar*

He was part of the papal delegation, and his purpose in Constantinople at the time was to try to negotiate a unified Christianity between the Catholic and Orthodox Greek churches. During the siege, he was to defend the sector of Saint Demetrios after the city fell under the rule of Cardinal Isidore.

Michael Critobulus, *Greek Historian*

Although not present, Michael Cirobulus played a massive role in the events following the fall of Constantinople. He aided and recorded the rule of Mehmed II and recorded the first 17 years of Mehmed's 30 years in power in one of his most famous writings. He did not play a fighting or defensive role in the siege, but he was a significant observer who recorded the bombardment of the city walls.

Helena Palaiologina, *daughter of Demetrius Palaleologus*

As the only child of Demetrios Palaiologos, Despot of Morea, Helena Palaiologina held significant influence over her father. This Byzantine princess was famous for her beauty and good spirit.

The Military:

Gabriele Trevisano, *Venetian Commander*

He was in charge of defending the Golden Horn. He helped ships that possessed aid enter the Golden Horn despite Ottoman attacks and was able to attack the Turks as they were entering using fire on May 28. However, that plan failed due to a betrayal, which led to his capture and later ransom payment.

Alviso Diedo, *Venetian Captain*

During the siege, he and Gabriele Trevisano could command the ships while attempting to protect Golden Horn. On the day of the siege, he broke the ships' chains and fled with several refugees, escaping to the Genoese colony in Galata. He was able to report on the fall of Venice safely.

János Hunyadi, *Hungarian Governor & General*

He was titled “törökverő” (conquerer of the Turks) after he defended Europe and, more importantly, was hungry for Ottoman Turks. He was able to attack their forces and delay their arrival into Europe by leading many successful campaigns on the Turks and, in 1456, was able to climb victory on the Turks, which led to the delay of the Turks' attack on Hungary for several decades.

Giovanni Giustiniani Longo, *Commander of the Byzantine Land Defense*

Giovanni arrived and was personally appointed by Constantine XI as the commander of St. Romanus' defense, specifically the vulnerable parts of the walls. In doing so, Giovanni brought 700 trained soldiers from Genoa into the near gate of St. Romanus. On the day of the attack, the commander's injury led to a decline in the soldiers' morale and the eventual fall of the city.

Loukas Notaras, *Commander-In-Chief of the Byzantine Navy*

Loukas notaras could impact the siege from his position as megas doux (grand duke) of the Byzantine Empire. He was assigned to defend along the northwestern sea wall. Up until that point, his efforts paid off very well in holding back the Ottoman troops. Despite that, his requests for Western aid were rejected, and he was eventually vilified from both sides of the religious conflict in the Byzantine Empire.

Pere Julia, *Catalan Commander*

Pere Julia was somewhat of a myth regarding the fall of Constantinople. He was first believed to be a Catalan consul and later believed to be a military leader who was attempting to protect Constantinople from the Turkish siege.

Philosophers and historians have debunked Pere Julia as a myth and not a living person at the time.

Orhan Çelebi, *Ottoman defector*

Prince of the Ottoman Empire, Orhan Çelebi was held as a hostage during the siege. During the siege, he joined the Byzantines in defending their empire, leading around 600 Ottoman defectors in defending part of the sea walls.

Theophilos Palaiologos, *Commander of Byzantine Troops*

Cousin of Constantine XI, Theophilos Palaiologos was the commander of Byzantine troops during the siege. He was known for his intelligence and strength as well as his caution towards and distrust of others.

The Church:

Pope Nicholas V, *Renaissance Pope*

Pope Nicholas V's importance in the 1453 siege of Constantinople was great as Emperor Constantine XI appealed to the Pope's assistance when the enemy forces, along with their emperor, approached. He attempted to rally an army of support for a crusade to defend Constantinople. This was not a huge success because many nations he was attempting to rally were preoccupied with their own conflicts and couldn't provide substantial aid.

Isidore of Kiev, *Greek Orthodox Patriarch*

Isidore of Kiev was both the metropolitan of Kiev and a cardinal during the fall. He was an extreme supporter of the union of the Catholic and Orthodox churches. He was able to unite Greek, Genoese, and Venetian forces to aid him in defending his city. He participated in the desperate efforts to fix the walls after the Ottoman artillery attacked.

John Bessarion, *Byzantine Humanist & Theologian*

John Bessarion was a prominent theologian and diplomat in the Byzantines. He worked in Italy for some time to garner Western support to unite the Catholic and Orthodox churches. In 1439, he played a significant role in the Council of Florence and advocated for Eastern Christians during the fall.

Gennadius Scholarius, *Byzantine Philosopher and Theologian*

Byzantine philosopher Gennadius Scholarius was a Greek scholar in theology and philosophy. He believed that the Orthodox Church should adopt Aristotelian philosophy. During the siege, Gennadius was found and taken prisoner.

Foreign Powers:

Pietro di Campofregoso, *Doge of Genoa*

As the Doge of Genoa, Pietro di Campofregoso was the highest elected magistrate of the city-state. His rule was one of the most disastrous for Genoa's stability. In 1459, he was stoned to death by his people.



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