

CINEMIEN Film & Video Distribution
Amsteldijk 10
1074 HP Amsterdam
t. 020 – 577 6010
www.cinemien.nl
info@cinemien.nl

ABC Distribution
Kaasstraat 4
2000 Antwerpen
t. 03 – 231 0931
www.abc-distribution.be
info@abc-distribution.be

presenteren / présenter:

Waiting for the clouds



Een film van Yesim Ustaoglu

Sundance/NHK Filmmakers Award voor Beste Europese Script 2003

International Istanbul film festival:

BEST ACTRICE Award: Rüçhan Çalışkur

SPECIAL PRIZE OF THE JURY: **Waiting for the Clouds** van **Yeşim Ustaoglu** for being successful in cinematographically fitting a historical tragedy into the personal world of a woman.

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WAITING FOR THE CLOUDS - synopsis

Turkije, in de politiek onrustige jaren '70. De ideologie van een zelfstandige staat, de nieuwe Turkse Republiek, zorgt voor frustratie en angst bij de mensen. Samen met heersende vooroordelen en de oppervlakkigheid van het dagelijks leven heerst er grote intolerantie tegenover iedereen die 'anders' is of denkt.

In deze omgeving leeft een oudere vrouw, Ayse, in een dorpje aan de Zwarte Zee, waar ze probeert vrede te vinden met haar gecompliceerde verleden. Ze woont samen met haar stervende, oudere zus Selma. Door de ogen van de achtjarige Mehmet ontdekken we dat ze in werkelijkheid geen zussen zijn, maar dat Ayse van Griekse afkomst is en gevlucht voor het Ottomaanse leger dat in 1916 de dorpen ten westen van Trabzon binnen vielen; een in de geschiedenisboekjes vergeten genocide die nog diepe wonden achterlaat.

Waiting for the Clouds refereert aan de menselijke pijn die sinds deze vergeten etnische zuiveringen nog steeds bij de slachtoffers in het geheugen gegrift staat. Ayse's echte naam is Eleni en ze is als 10-jarig meisje met haar Griekse familie gevlucht. Ze moest samen met haar moeder, jonger broertje Niko en babyzusje een eindeloze sneeuwtocht doorstaan. Moeder en zusje overleven de grote kou en honger niet; Eleni weet zich door de sneeuw te worstelen en redt zichzelf en Niko.



Wanneer ze op sterven na dood aankomen in een klein dorpje worden ze door een Turkse familie liefdevol opgenomen. Haar hechte band met de tiener Selma helpt Eleni het trauma te verwerken. Omdat ze als zusjes door het leven gaan, durft Ayse het 50 jaar lang niet aan om haar ware identiteit te onthullen, bang dat haar verleden negatieve gevolgen zal hebben...

WAITING FOR THE CLOUDS

87 min / Kleur / 35 mm / Dolby SRD / Grieks en Turks gesproken / FR-DL-GR-T 2004

Nederlandse theatrale distributie: Cinemien www.cinemien.nl

Belgische theatrale distributie: ABC Distribution www.abc-distribution.be

DVD uitbreng : Homescreeen www.homescreeen.nl

Filmnummer: 645

Kijkwijzer: 

WAITING FOR THE CLOUDS - synopsis (FR)

Tôt dans la matinée, les employés du bureau de recensement arrivent dans la ville portuaire de Tirebolu, en Turquie. Les rues sont désertes et silencieuses. Il est évident que dans leur travail, les recenseurs ne pourront pas compter tous les habitants. En effet, des questions sur le passé de quelques-uns peuvent rouvrir certaines plaies. C'est le cas d'Ayse. Pendant cinquante longues années, afin de protéger son statut familial, cette femme est restée muette à propos de sa véritable identité.

En vérité, Ayse était la fille d'une des familles grecques de la région de la Mer Noire évacuées en 1916. Son véritable prénom était Eleni. Après la mort de sa mère et de sa sœur due au froid et à la faim, elle a bravé toutes les tempêtes pour sauver sa vie et celle de son frère Niko, un enfant de six ans. Exténués, ils sont tous les deux arrivés dans un village éloigné où ils furent recueillis par une famille turque. À travers l'amour que lui a prodigué Selma, la fille adolescente du couple, elle est parvenue à cicatriser le traumatisme dont elle a souffert.



WAITING FOR THE CLOUDS

87 min. / 35 mm / couleur / Dolby SRD / dialogues en Turque et Grecque / Turquie 2003

Sortie en Belgique: ABC Distribution www.abc-distribution.be

Sortie sur DVD: Homescreeen www.homescreeen.be

WAITING FOR THE CLOUDS - crew

Regie	: Yesim Ustaoglu
Scenario	: Petros Markaris & Yesim Ustaoglu
Geïnspireerd door	: Goerge Andreadis' 'Tamama'
Camera	: Jacek Petrycki
Montage	: Nicolas Gaster, Timo Linnasalo
Art Director	: Selda Ulkenciler
Muziek	: Michael Galasso
Producenten	: Setareh Farsi, Behrooz Hashemian
Co-Producenten	: Helge Albers, Fenia Cossovitsa, Murat Çelikkan
Geluid	: Bernd von Bassewitz
Geluidsmontage	: Christophe Winding



WAITING FOR THE CLOUDS - cast

Ayshe/ Eleni	: Rüchan Caliskur
Mehmet	: Ridvan Yagci
Chengiz	: Ismail Baysan
Tanasis	: Dimitrios Kamperidis
Feride	: Feride Karaman
Selma	: Suna Selen
Muharrem	: Oktar Durukan
Nikos	: Jannis Georgiadis
Zoe	: Irene Tachmatzidou
Damoklia	: Damoklia Mustakidou
Fatma	: Fatma Parlaci

WAITING FOR THE CLOUDS - over regisseur Yesim Ustaoglu

Yesim Ustaoglu heeft eerst een aantal prijswinnende korte films gemaakt alvorens ze debuteerde met haar eerste lange speelfilm IZ (THE TRACE). De film werd gepresenteerd op verschillende internationale festivals, waaronder festivals in Moskou en Göteborg. Haar veelgeprezen tweede film, JOURNEY TO THE SUN (ook door Cinemien en ABC Distribution uitgebracht), kreeg de Blue Angel Award voor de Beste Europese Film en de Peace Film Prize op het Berlijn Film Festival van 1999.

Ook won de film de prijzen voor Best Film en Best Director op het Istanbul Filmfestival in datzelfde jaar.



Filmografie:

Speelfilms

- **Waiting for the clouds** (Bulutlari Beklerken) 2004
- **Journey to the Sun** (Gunese Yolculuk) 1999
- **The Trace** (Iz) 1994

Korte Films

- **Hotel** 1992
- **Duet** 1990
- **Magnafantagna** 1987
- **Bir Ani Yakalamak** 1984

Documentaires

- **Life on their shoulders** 2004

History of the Ponto-Greek

The Pontic (from the Greek: *euxinos pontos* = hospitable sea) is a Greek community which first settled on the southern shore of the Black Sea about 3000 years ago and later also on the north, east and west coasts. The first settlers came from Miletus to Asia Minor at the beginning of the 8th century B.C. and founded the city of Sinopi. Settlers from other Greek cities like Megara and Athens followed. The foundation of these new coastal cities meant the Pontic Greeks were able to control important trade routes. The area was later ruled by the Persians: the Greek cities, however, retained their autonomous status and were governed democratically. The economic power of these Greek cities reached its peak during the time of Alexander the Great and his successors. After Alexander's death, Mithridates (around 320 B.C.) founded the first Pontic state. During Mithridates' dynasty the "Hellenisation" of the hinterland was advanced. In 63 B.C. the kingdom was annexed by the Roman Empire, an action which subsequently provided the Pontic people with wealth and peace.

In 1461, the city of Trapezount ("the last bastion of the empire") was conquered by the Turks. The Greeks fled in their thousands to the Caucasus, to Russia, Georgia, Armenia and to Kazakhstan, or to the mountains in the hinterland where they founded new Greek cities - cultural centres, where persecuted Greeks were still welcomed with open arms generations later. As a consequence of this, a second Ponto-Greek community grew up around the same time, especially in Russia, which became bigger and stronger through further immigration of refugees throughout the entire period of Ottoman rule. More than half a million Pontic people soon lived in Russia alone and after further immigration in 1918 the number had exceeded a total of 650,000. Many Pontic Greeks were, at the same time, assimilated forcibly by the Muslims.

The last real heyday for the Pontic Greeks occurred at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, when it is possible to speak of a Renaissance of Greek culture on the shores of the Black Sea. These people were traders who built up schools, founded theatre groups and organisations for traditional costumes and published newspapers. The seizure of power by the "Young Turks" in 1908 meant the beginning of the end of the Greeks and of all Christians in the Ottoman Empire. The "Young Turks" set themselves the higher aim of the "Turkisation" of the Ottoman Empire - the Christian communities should be exterminated through genocide and forced assimilation. Kemal Atatürk completed this policy through the means of his so-called "Liberation Revolution". The Lausanne Treaty of 1923 meant the end of the Greek presence in the Ponto region, one which had existed for a thousand years. As part of the obligatory resettlement, 1,250,000 Greeks from Turkey were forcibly expatriated to Greece.

Everyone who managed to survive the strain of their flight or to escape the guns of their persecutors found sanctuary in Greece, Russia and also in Armenia and Egypt. Only the Pontic people who had become Muslims stayed behind (in the area of Tokat and Of). To this day, they still speak their Pontic dialect, one derived from ancient Greek. May 19th is a day of remembrance for the Pontic Greek genocide.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

In WAITING FOR THE CLOUDS, the character Ayshe would not have had to keep her ethnic identity a secret for 50 years if she had lived in a tolerant environment. When I first heard the stories of people like Ayshe in northeastern Turkey, I felt this was a part of history which had remained in the dark for too long. I hope the film will have meaning for citizens of any multicultural country with identity issues. I have always been interested in the patchwork that actually makes up Turkish history and culture. I think it's a pity that the idea of one nation means that elements of some cultures must be thrown away. The Turkish government has always been very sensitive about the unofficial part of our history, meaning anything about ethnic minorities.

COMMENTS FROM DIRECTOR YESIM USTAOGU

TURKEY IN THE 1970S

WAITING FOR THE CLOUDS takes place in 1975. I based the experiences of the boy Mehmet on my own experiences, since I was a girl in the early 70s. I learned the same nationalistic chants as shown in the grade school scenes. I remember Turkey was going through a tumultuous period politically.

THE IDEA OF ONE NATION

The new Turkish Republic established after World War I was based on the idea of one nation. However, this meant that life became harder for all minorities. Armenians, Greeks and others were chased out of Turkey, often under the most horrible conditions. Those who managed to survive did so only by converting to Islam and by keeping their true identities secret for the remainder of their lives. Shortly after the establishment of the new Republic, an exchange pact was signed between Greece and Turkey for those who managed to survive. Greeks still living in Turkey went home to Greece and the Turks came back to Turkey. But others, like Ayshe in WAITING FOR THE CLOUDS, stayed and never talked about their past again.

HIDING ETHNIC IDENTITY

The character of Ayshe was born Eleni, daughter of indigenous Greeks in the eastern Black Sea region of Northern Turkey, what was once the ancient country of Pontus. After being orphaned in the World War I exodus of the Pontus Greek Orthodox population, she was adopted by a Turkish Muslim family. Fear is the reason that Ayshe never spoke of her ethnic past again. In WAITING FOR THE CLOUDS, I wanted to touch on how government paranoia puts pressure on ordinary lives. If there had been tolerance, Ayshe would not have had to keep her ethnic identity a secret for 50 years. But in 1970s Turkey, paranoia and a fear of "others" was on the rise while tolerance toward minority ethnic groups diminished.

AYSHE'S OTHER SECRET

Only Ayshe and her younger brother survived the Winter exodus. While she was adopted by a compassionate Turkish family, he was held in the town orphanage. When he was deported, Ayshe could have gone with him, but, then a young, scared girl, she decided to stay within the safety of her new home and family. Her decision to live as a "true" Turk ends up haunting her for the rest of her life. In WAITING FOR THE CLOUDS, Ayshe attempts to exorcize the guilt she has long felt for

abandoning her brother.

RESEARCH

The details of the exodus that Ayshe shares in *WAITING FOR THE CLOUDS* are based on real events. Ayshe/Eleni is actually based on a real woman named Tamama, whose biography was written by a Greek writer, George Andreadis.

My research was partly done in the Ottoman Archives in Sofia. I also read as much as I could find by Pontus historians, and by Turkish historians living outside of Turkey, like Taner Akcam. Besides meeting the women who stayed in Turkey, I've also met with some of the women who were deported to Greece, and I've noticed both sets of women share certain similarities, such as having had difficulty in establishing new lives or starting families.

THE CONTROVERSY

The Greek Parliament, in 1994, adopted May 19 to commemorate "Turkish Genocide against the Pontus Greeks." It has been claimed that from 1916-1923, the Greek Orthodox population of Turkey's eastern Black Sea region became victim of a systematic policy of extermination by Turkish authorities. In the government-organized evacuation in Winter 1916, it is estimated that between 350,000 and 500,000 Pontus Greeks died from cold, hunger and sickness on a weeks-long trek. There is an on-going debate as to the exact number of deaths. For years, various governments have avoided acknowledging these deaths for fear of insulting Turkey. The Turkish government has always been very sensitive about the unofficial part of our history, meaning anything about ethnic minorities. (As shown in *WAITING FOR THE CLOUDS*, Turkey's first census to include all minorities was only in 1975.) Regarding the Pontus Greek issue, it has long been taboo. We aren't taught about any of this in school. But this will hopefully change since Turkey is eager to gain admittance to the European Union.

GEOGRAPHICAL AUTHENTICITY

I shot *WAITING FOR THE CLOUDS* in the exact locations where the story takes place. The town of Trebolu is located on the coast 90 kilometers west of Trabzon in Northern Turkey. Trabzon was occupied in 1916 by the Russians, while Trebolu was not. All the villages west of Trabzon, like Trebolu, were ordered to vacate. That's why I wanted to shoot in that location. The Greek portion of the shoot took place in Thessaloniki in the Kalamaria region, where the exiled Pontus Greeks settled when they arrived in Greece.

THE HIGHLANDS

I tried to find locations that still have the same conditions of life as in 1975 or before. The highlands were a very special location. There was no electricity and no actual road. To reach the highlands requires a 3500-meter uphill hike on a very narrow path. All of our equipment had to be carried up that path without motorized vehicles. Living conditions up there haven't changed for centuries. It was very exciting to find such a location, but the shooting conditions were very difficult. Life up there is very minimalist and rustic. We lived weeks in the same conditions as the villagers. I think this made us feel much closer to them. But it doesn't take long to discover how dependent we are on modern city comforts.

LOCAL PLAYERS

Aside from the main characters, Ayshe, Thanassis, Selma, I cast only local people. All the others

were non-professionals from the village where we shot. All of them, including Mehmet, Chengiz and Mehmet's Mother, who have fairly substantial roles. For the wedding scene in the highlands, we actually organized a real wedding. We invited the whole village up into the mountains. They all came and celebrated with us and we shot the sequence.

I made several trips to the Black Sea Coast region before the shoot. During these trips I had the opportunity to live with the local people and get better acquainted with them, their life and traditions, which led me to also make a documentary on this subject.