MATERIALS FOR THE STUDY OF THE WORK AND THOUGHT

OF ARNOLD J. TOYNBEE

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THE SMYRNA PROBLEM (I)

VIEWS OF THE WESTERN EUROPEAN COLONY

by Arnold J. Toynbee

I will try to state briefly what Smyrna is, what has happened to it since the Armistice, what are the views of the chief communities in the city and its hinterland on the present situation, and what the possible alternatives to this situation appear to be. The local factors are the least known in England; the local communities have the least opportunity for putting their case. Of course, everyone here realises that the problem which is life-and-death to them will be settled not here but in London or Paris, and probably not on the merits of the local situation. Yet in equity the local factors ought to be the principal consideration. Without seeing it for oneself it is difficult to realise the importance of the human interests or the extent and productivity of the territories concerned.

Smyrna is a port with about 350,000 inhabitants and large residential suburbs. It lives, and always has lived since the beginning of its history, on the trade of its hinterland. At times this trade has been shared with rivals, but now Ephesus and Miletus are archeological curiosities. Since the 16th century, at least, the whole trade of the west coast of Anatolia has been concentrated at Smyrna, and the hinterland of this trade has been expanding. The French and British railways, begun after the Crimean War and gradually pushed up on the plateau, have extended the economic dominion of Smyrna over about a third of the Anatolian peninsula. During the few years before the war the Germans built the Anatolian Railway across Smyrna's line of advance and tried to head off the trade of the interior to their new port of Haidar Pasha, on the Bosphorus, opposite Constantinople. But this diversion was artificial, and the defeat of Germany has killed her railway policy in the Ottoman Empire. During the war the Smyrna vilayet was not a zone of military operations. The Vali, Rahmi Bey, treated the Western community (mostly belonging to nations at war with Turkey) well, and refused to massacre the Armenians. The city, the people, and the

province of Smyrna emerged from the war comparatively intact, with the fairest expectations of political improvement and economic prosperity.

A Victim of After-the-War

Smyrna is one of the victims of the war – after the war. October, 1918 (the date of the armistice with Turkey), not October, 1914 (when Turkey entered the Great War), was the beginning of her misfortunes; since that date she has seen a two days' massacre in her streets; fighting all up and down the richest part of her hinterland, the Meander Valley, where, I am told, that there are now devastated areas reminiscent of Northern France; the establishment of a military front in the interior, which cuts her railways in halt and pares down her hinterland to an area on which she cannot live; and, finally, the delimitation, under the Treaty of Sèvres, of a still smaller zone round the city, which is to be placed for five years, and possibly in permanence, under a different government from the rest of Anatolia. No doubt the treaty constitutes Smyrna a free port for the territory excluded politically from the Smyrna zone, and the makers of the treaty will argue that the political separation of this zone from Turkey is without prejudice to the economic unity of Anatolia. But the business community of Smyrna see their hinterland cut in pieces at present, not by mere political boundaries but by trenches and no-man's lands, infested with brigands, and there is no prospect locally of this paralysing state of insecurity being brought to an end. The Smyrniots would be less bitter if the misfortune that has overtaken them had been caused by the war. Their good fortune during the war, their high hopes at the Armistice, and the sabotaging (as it appears to them) of the economic life of this country by the decisions of the Supreme Council, are more than they can bear with equanimity.

The Business Community

When I talk of the business-community I mean the West European inhabitants of the city and its suburbs, with such other elements in the population as depend on them economically. The Dutch are the oldest, the French and British the largest of these Western colonies. They have all been here since the latter part or the 16th or the beginning of the 17th century. Certain families have lived here from generation to generation continuously for 150 years. This is their home. They love the country, are proud of its beauty and fertility, and are wrapped up in the business enterprises which have made their fortunes and enriched the province. The American community, though the youngest, has so thoroughly identified itself with educational and other philanthropic enterprises that its roots now strike as deep as those of the others. These people can justly claim to have made Smyrna what it is, and they are hit hardest, both in pocket and in sentiment, by the present situation. They make a scapegoat of the Greeks. To their mind (speaking generally) the misfortunes of Smyrna date from the Greek occupation. Their ideal is an "integral Anatolia" with Smyrna for its economic capital and a unitary Turkish Government (in the commercial hinterland of Smyrna, taken as a whole, the Turks are enormously preponderant) under the control of some or all of those Powers of which the Western residents in Smyrna are nationals. They had practically attained this ideal during the months between the capitulation of Turkey in the autumn of 1918 and the landing of the Greeks in the following spring. This is the situation to which they wish to return.