

MATERIALS FOR THE STUDY OF THE WORK AND THOUGHT  
OF ARNOLD J. TOYNBEE

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## THE SMIRNA PROBLEM, II

### METHODS AND AIMS OF THE GREEK ADMINISTRATION

by Arnold J. Toynbee

In my previous article I explained the point of view of the Western Europeans in Smyrna. The Greeks see things very differently. The great majority of the population of Greece has no economic status in Smyrna. For them the occupation of this country means the liberation of their unredeemed fellow-countrymen and an important step on the road towards the recovery of Constantinople. With the local Greeks also nationalism is the first consideration. They are beginning to discover that their national allegiance and their economic interest may pull different ways, but they are prepared to sacrifice much for their political ideal, and for them the restoration of Turkish rule is an appalling prospect after the Greek has been top dog and – for a very brief but most regrettable period at the beginning of the occupation – has misused his position. Moreover, many of the Ionian Greeks are not traders in Smyrna but peasants in the country districts along the coast, who lived in great insecurity under the Turkish regime, and for these the Greek occupation has been nothing but a gain. And then there are the Greek administrators. I have not yet had an opportunity of seeing the local Greek officials at work, and the character of every Government depends on the average standard of its personnel. But except for the gendarmerie, which the Greek High Commissioner has taken over entirely, I understand that the pre-existing authorities have been mostly left in their positions, and the guiding spirits at the centre, who are the new element in the government of the country, certainly make a very favourable impression. The high commissioner, Mr. Stergiadis, and his principal assistants are unquestionably giving the Smyrna zone the best administration in their power. Their task is beset with difficulties – the initial hostility of the Turkish and the western elements in the population; the acute party divisions among the Greeks; the economic dislocation produced by the fighting in the hinterland; the spitting of the hinterland into several isolated fragments; the discord between

the Allied Powers, which, in spite of the signing of the treaty, prolongs the atmosphere of uncertainty in regard to the political future; the difficulties deliberately placed by certain Powers in the Greek Administration's path; and finally the general discomfort which Smyrna, like the rest of the world, is suffering in consequence of the Great War. Mr. Stergiadis and his colleagues are not dismayed by these obstacles, and they are not, I think, exploiting their authority for the benefit of their own countrymen. I am convinced that they are single-minded in their aims, and they are working with all their might for the good of the country and population as a whole. Coming from Athens, where all the world talks party politics and cannot get away from the controversies of 1916 and 1917, I was struck at once by the fact that these men talk about administrative problems and are looking all the time towards the future. The "good civil servant" is, happily, a familiar type in the British Empire. I have found Greek examples of it here. These are essentially professional administrators in spirit, though in fact most of them are distinguished recruits from other carriers. Mr. Stergiadis himself is a barrister, and was only persuaded with difficulty to enter public life. His colleague who is organising the University – which includes in embryo the departments of public health and agriculture – is a mathematician. They are full – almost too full – of ideas, and when I talk to them I feel as I were talking again with the British administrators of Mesopotamia during the war period. I find the same devotion to the task, the same belief in the future of the country, the same delight in constructive work, and also, perhaps, the same tendency to overestimate the extent of what administrative action is able to accomplish, the same desire to jump at fences, instead of looking for a way round them, the same under-estimation of difficulties (for instance, of those created by the existence of the Capitulations), and finally the same dangerous inclination to treat the raw material of administration as if it were lifeless metal or clay, and not living men and women with aims and ideas of their own.

## Public Security

There is something very attractive to an Englishman in these Greek civil servants. For them it is a new experience to put an undeveloped country into order. They are in the first stage of the colonial problem, in which the material aspect predominates and in which brilliant results can be achieved by honest work. They are not troubled yet by those psychological factors which came to the front in the second chapter, and which are baffling British administrators just now in India and Egypt. The great thing they have achieved already is public security. This is admitted by all parties in Smyrna, including those avowedly opposed to the Greek regime. You can now walk about in safety, not only in the country districts, but in the immediate neighbourhood of Smyrna city, which counted, under the Turkish regime, as one of worst-policed districts in the world. They reckon, I think, that if they can gradually effect corresponding improvements in other public services – if they can modernise the port, extend the railways, irrigate the plains, stamp out malaria, and reduce the menace of syphilis – they can win the support of the non-Greek elements in the population.

Personally, I think they are too optimistic. The western colony likes material improvements, but is it willing to purchase them at the price of its privileged position? Commercially it may be more profitable to live in a misgoverned Turkey under the shelter of the Capitulations than as an ordinary citizen in a decently governed Greek territory. And again, the Capitulations give those who enjoy their privileges an unquestioned status, while if the Smyrna zone is eventually annexed to Greece and the Capitulations disappear there is no security that the general standard of public morality in Greece will realise the aspirations of the present specially-chosen Greek administrators of the Smyrna zone. I fancy that, for Greece, the conciliation of the western colony in Smyrna is going to be a thorny problem, even if the economic relations of port and hinterland are successfully restored.

### The Massacre of Moslems

Then there are the Turks. It is said of Mr. Sterghiadis (and not only by Greeks) that where there is an issue between a Turk and a Greek he goes out of his way to favour the former.

One of his colleagues remarked to me (I am sure with sincerity) that the conciliation of the Turkish population in the zone was the solution of the political problem. In this matter Mr. Sterghiadis has had a remarkable success. He arrived in Smyrna on the fifteenth day of the Greek occupation. During the first two days there had been a massacre of Moslems in the streets and on the quay. It was perpetrated by the disembarking Greek troops, egged on by the local Greek population. I have listened to detailed accounts of this massacre from separate eye-witnesses, and an inter-allied Commission, appointed to investigate it, drew up a report, which was long held back, but was subsequently published, at least in part, in the press. I am afraid that the affair was about as bad as it could be. Even if there was provocation (which is a disputed point), the killing went far beyond retaliation, and I am told that the looting lasted ten days or so longer than the bloodshed. When Mr. Sterghiadis arrived he stopped this dead, and he has apparently succeeded in by now in counteracting the moral consequences of this deplorable prelude to his administration. Whatever the Smyrnist Turk may feel, the High Commissioner's Government has certainly won the confidence of the Turkish peasantry. Turkish peasants from Mustapha Kemal's country have come as refugees into the Greek lines; when the Greek troops have made reconnaissance and then retreated, they have latterly been followed, in several cases, by part of the Turkish population, who seized the opportunity to escape from Mustapha's power. The recent submission of Edhem Bey, a feudal magnate from Salihli, on the extreme border of the Smyrna zone, who has hitherto been one of Mustapha's lieutenants, is a remarkable triumph. In fact, the Greek administrator is delighted with the rural Turk, just as the first British administrators in Egypt were delighted with the fellah. You can do so much for him; he is so easy to manage; he works so hard; he has all the primitive virtues. Governing him is as satisfactory as breeding prize cattle. And yet – the comparison with Egypt suggests misgivings. Can he be bred beyond a certain degree? Will he not become less manageable in the process? Have you really a free hand with him? Can you annul the overwhelming influence of his religion? Can you successfully compete for his allegiance with the mufti and the bey? Let us admit that his national leaders do not work for his interests but exploit him for their own. Is he so intelligent that he will realise where his true interest lie? Can you counteract the suggestions they will always be implanting in him? No doubt, if the Greek Administration had the Turkish governing

class on its side all would be well, but that (as we know ourselves in Egypt, India, and Mesopotamia) is virtually impossible. How can a new Government be liked or even tolerated by the old rulers whom it has supplanted?

### **The Submission of Edhem Bey**

Take the case of Edhem Bey. I happened to be in General Papoulas's headquarters at Smyrna when Edhem came in to make his formal submission, and I saw him for a minute as he walked out of the General's room. He looked a proud, surly, violent-tempered kind of a man, and he is credited with having many people's blood on his head. I wondered what would happen when he returned to his estates at Salihli. For the moment he has quarrelled with Kemal; he wants to go home and look after his affairs; he has made up his mind to come to terms with the Greeks. But can he become permanently reconciled to the Greek Administration? Under the old system he was a feudal lord, accustomed to treat the Turkish peasantry on his estates as he pleased and to dominate the neighbourhood. No doubt the law and order of the Greek regime will in time increase his rents, but it will also deprive him from the outset of his arbitrary power. He can no longer reign – for good or evil – over Salihli, and if he clings to his estate and becomes a citizen of the Smyrna zone he cannot continue his career in the military or the civil service of the Ottoman Empire. No doubt he could serve under Mr. Sterghidis – if he had either the desire or the qualifications. But feudal barons do not easily find a niche in modern colonial Administration. I prophesy that Edhem Bey and his kind will give Mr. Sterghiadis trouble, and that the Turkish peasantry on their estates will follow their lead, as they have done for generations, even if it is against their true interests to do so.

### **Educated Turks' Grievance**

As for the educated Turks in Smyrna and the larger provincial centres, like Manisa or Odemish, I have not yet had an opportunity (as I hope to have later) of discussing the situation with them directly. But there is an important class of Turks in the district – officials, lawyers, doctors, and cultivated men of leisure – who (like the Greeks, though less thoroughly) have come under the influence of Western civilisation. The friendship of this class is all-important for the success of Mr. Sterghiadis's policy, but I have heard from several sources (though so far at second hand) that he has wounded the feelings of this class rather seriously by the sequestration of the Sultaniyya School, the big Moslem educational institution in Smyrna city which prepares boys for the University at Constantinople. This is the point in Mr. Sterghiadis's policy on which I have heard the most serious criticism. He has, I suppose, a good technical case. Under the Treaty of Sèvres, the High Commissariat is empowered to take over all Ottoman Government property in the Smyrna zone. The Sultaniyya School falls under the category, though I am not sure that part of its fine buildings and considerable endowment in landed property was not originally given by private donation. Mr. Sterghiadis wants the building for law courts, and he has offered to pay the rent for another building to house the Sultaniyya School, if the Turkish community can find one. But it is notorious that in Smyrna the house famine is as acute as in most other large cities of the world, and also – what is going to happen to the large income which the school draws from its landed property? Is that to go with the buildings? I suspend judgment till I have made inquiries on this point, but, anyhow, the paralysis which has overtaken the school through the loss of its buildings has created very great soreness among precisely that element in the Turkish population which really cares for progress and which ought therefore to have been conciliated before all others by an enlightened administration. There is surely an error of judgment here which can be and ought to be repaired before it does further harm to Mr. Sterghiadis's policy. It is not characteristic of that policy, and I have dwelt on it because it is the only serious blot I have discovered so far upon what is otherwise a very fine record.

My first hasty verdict on the Greek administration of the Smyrna zone, taken as a whole, is that it is a very creditable beginning in the face of formidable difficulties, and that it would be an act of wantonness on the part of the Allied Powers to wreck it in the midst of its work.

I do not think that they have anything comparable to put in its place, but I will leave this question to my best article, in which I shall discuss the future.