

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

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THE SMYRNA PROBLEM, III
SUGGESTIONS FOR A SPECIAL ADMINISTRATION

by Arnold J. Toynbee

As far as I can see, there are four solutions of the Smyrna problem in the field at present: (I) the Treaty of Sèvres, (II) a modification of the treaty in favour of the Greeks by an enlargement of the Smyrna zone, (III) the abolition of the zone and restoration of Ottoman sovereignty *sans phrase*, and (IV) establishment of a special administration, neither under Greek nor under Ottoman sovereignty, not merely in Smyrna city and the zone delimited by the treaty, but over greater part of that far larger area which constitutes Smyrna's economic hinterland.

The treaty has the immense advantage of actually holding the ground, but I have found nobody in Smyrna who has any positive good to say of it. The western commercial community hates it because it cuts their hinterland in pieces. The Greeks are discontented with it because it saddles them with an indefensible frontier in the Hermos valley and leaves on the wrong side important Greek minorities who are at present behind the shelter of the Greek military lines. The Turks (or rather the politically conscious element among them) cannot bear any settlement which gives Greece a foothold on the Anatolian mainland. The French Government are opposed to it because they want to conciliate the Turkish governing class and so draw Turkey into the wake of French foreign policy. The Italian Government are working against it because they wish in every way to limit the aggrandisement of their Greek neighbours. What the British Government want I do not know; possibly they do not know themselves; but I am embarrassed by the strength of the conviction prevalent among Greeks of all parties and classes, that Mr. Lloyd George has constituted himself their champion. I fear they may be disillusioned, and at the same time I should on the whole be surprised if the Treaty of Sèvres did not ultimately survive, however unworkable the Smyrna clauses may be.

Impossible Greek Aspirations

The second solution – an extension of the Greek zone – need hardly be taken into consideration. It is inevitable that the Greek should dream of it, for if you go by train from Smyrna to Alashehir, as I did the other day, it is an unbroken plain all the way, and you are hardly more than 200 metres above sea-level at the eastern end of it. From the geographical point of view the valleys debouching on the Aegean coast are a unity right away up to the edge of the Anatolian plateau, which begins just east of Alashehir (I am writing now from Ushag, on the top of the plateau, on the Greek military front). And as for considerations of nationality – well, the population in a major part of the Smyrna zone as delineated by the treaty is as overwhelmingly Turkish as it is at Alashehir or Ushag, and if the Powers have given Greece (in effect) such Turkish cities as Manisa or Odemish, on what ground of principle do they deny her the heads of the valleys? I sympathise with the wish of the Greek soldiers for a strategical line and with their reluctance to abandon any Greek minority, however small, to the mercy of the Kemalists. And yet these Greek aspirations are surely impossible. The Italians would never consent to them (the Italian zone of economic influence under the treaty includes Alashehir and encircle the Smyrna zone on the south and the east. The French would never consent either, and the British Government have no incentive to quarrel with their allies and their Moslems in order to modify the treaty in Greece's favour. Nor would the extension of the Greek zone solve the economic problem.

There is a limit to the number of Turks that even the most optimistic Greek Imperialist is prepared to take in, and I have found no Greek who lays claim to the permanent possession of any part of the plateau. Yet the economic hinterland of Smyrna extends a long way east of the heads of the valleys, and this town of Ushag, where I am writing, is a great centre for the manufacture of "Smyrna" carpets – so called because those carpets are ordered, bought, transported, and placed on the world-market by the western business community in Smyrna city. Such Greek aspirations are hardly feasible, nor are they, I think, desirable in themselves.

What Restoring the Turk Would Mean

The third solution – the restoration of Ottoman sovereignty – is desired, I suppose, by every politically conscious Turk, and the French and Italian Governments have created the impression that they favour this settlement. I believe that the western community in Smyrna, in their present mood, would also accept it gladly, but they would do so with a very important reservation in their minds – namely, that the restored Turkish Administration should be subject to Allied control. If you ask them whether they dislike the present situation so much that they would welcome the restoration of Turkish sovereignty undiluted, they generally do not answer your question directly, but remark emphatically that the Turk as a ruler is impossible. By the restoration of Ottoman government the western community in Smyrna really mean the erection of an Ottoman façade, behind which they intend to exercise the real authority themselves with the backing of their own Governments. During their long history, the western colony have generally got on well with the Turk, and they are very confident about their ability to manage him now.

I think that they are over-confident, and that if Ottoman sovereignty is restored they may have a very disagreeable surprise. The ability of the French and British Smyrniots to manage the Turk depends on two things – the willingness of England and France to support their nationals abroad, and the willingness of the upper-class Turk to be “bossed” by tactful foreigners. I doubt whether the western community would be able to rely on either of these factors now as they have done in the past. What guarantee have the western residents in Smyrna that the restoration of Ottoman rule will not mean the advent of Kemal in their beloved province? Even if Kemal discreetly retired into the background when his aspirations were realised, I suspect that a restored Ottoman Administration in Smyrna would be a façade not for control by the western residents but for control by the Committee of Union and Progress.

And if they put their heads into this noose could the French and British Smyrniots count on the home Governments to cut the rope for them? I very much doubt it. The British Smyrniots are already complaining bitterly that his Majesty’s Government have ceased to stand up for them as they used to do, but they cannot get out of their heads the Palmerston tradition or bring themselves to believe that an ill-treatment of Englishmen abroad will not

be made a *casus belli* by the Government at home. If they could live for a few months in England (with which they are out of touch, Smyrna being their real home), and could see for themselves the post-war apathy of the British public in regard to foreign policy – if they could see how little English public opinion is affected by their nearest and most vital foreign problem Ireland –, I believe they would hesitate to tear up the Treaty of Sèvres and return to an Ottoman regime in the vague expectation of protection from home. They protest against having been “sold to Greece” by the British Government. The inference is that the Government want to be rid of responsibility for them. In these circumstances they are in danger of being resold to the Turk. And would they really prefer him to the Greek as a master?

As for the French Government, I imagine that they concern for French interests in Smyrna will not weigh against their general policy – for instance, against their wish to secure Turkish support against Russia and to come to an understanding with the Turks in the frontier zone between Cilicia and Syria. Syria. If the Western Smyrniots tamper rashly with the treaty, they may slip out of the trying-pan into the fire.

A Special Administration Over a Wider Zone.

There remains a fourth solution – the reunion of Smyrna with its economic hinterland and the establishment, in this larger zone, of an administration independent of both Turkey and Greece for a long term of years. The zone I have in mind would extend eastwards almost to Afium Kara Hissar and Adalia, and would include an area on which Smyrna could really live, unlike the present Greek zone, which would strangle Smyrna if the frontier drawn round it were to become (as is at present likely) an economic barrier. The long term of years – say fifteen or twenty – would give time for the population of the wider zone to grow into some kind of corporate unity, a process which could hardly take place during the short term of five years after which the population of the treaty zone is to vote upon its political future. Here are two important points in which I think the treaty might be modified with advantage.

I come now to the most difficult point of all – the form of government. First of all, I feel strongly that it would be a grave error to eject Mr. Sterghiadis and his immediate assistants. The work they have accomplished already, the energy and enthusiasm they are throwing

into it, are far too valuable to be thrown away. it would be a wanton act – whether done in ignorance or in ill-will – to scrap all this and start at the beginning again. Smyrna and her hinterland are in too serious a condition to be able to afford such a further dislocation. At the same time Mr. S Sterghiadis's Administration is not necessarily bound up with the conditions which the treaty prescribes. In effect, Mr. Sterghiadis is at present the Greek Government's pro-consul, hedged about with many treaty restrictions but virtually commissioned to carry the territory through a transitional phase of which the end (after five years) is to be annexation to Greece.

SEP] Cannot his commission be altered? I should like to see him administering not merely the treaty zone, but the whole area which I have described as the economic hinterland of Smyrna City. But I should also like to see him divested of all the obligations of a Greek pro-consul and liberated to work exclusively for the local interests of a territory and population which might well grow into a permanently distinct community independent alike of Greece and of Turkey.

The local constitution I have in mind is something like that of the Lebanon vilayet (with Ottoman suzerainty eliminated) as it was from 1864 to 1914. I should like to see the various elements in the territory organised into "millets" or non-territorial national bodies, like the Jewish and the various Christian "millets" in the Ottoman Empire, and the Moslem (which in this area means Turkish) element ought to constitute itself into a millet like the rest. I should like to see these millets represented proportionately, not only in the Parliament of the territory, but in the Cabinet or other supreme executive, in the Civil Service, and in the gendarmerie. Mr. Sterghiadis has achieved his great improvements in public security by importing gendarmerie from the kingdom of Greece, but it is well known that under the right leaders the Turk makes an excellent policeman. Why should not the Greek gendarmes be replaced gradually by a mixed local force, recruited in a fixed proportion from the various elements in the local population?

The Question of Defence

There remains, of course, the capital question of defence against attack from abroad. A mixed local gendarmerie could certainly keep down brigandage and maintain internal order, but I do not imagine that they could keep out Kemal if he continued to exist as a military force. He is not a dangerous force for any European army, but if the Greek army were withdrawn Kemal would be the only military force in the neighbourhood and there would be nothing to prevent him from walking in.

On the other hand, it is evident that sooner or later the Greek army of occupation must go. Neither the Allied Powers nor Greece herself can pay for it indefinitely, nor can 100,000 of Greece's best men remain permanently away from their work and their homes.

Now the Greek army is confident that, given a free hand, it could smash Kemal in a short spring campaign, and I believe that their confidence is justified. I believe that the Greeks could drive Kemal from the railway junctions of Afium Kara Hissar and Eski Shehir without serious opposition, and that there is really nothing to prevent them from marching on Angora. In that case the Turkish peasants, whom he levies by force, would desert him and return to their homes. He would also be cut off from the Italian base at Adalia, and I am inclined to think that he could be put permanently out of action.

If that could really be achieved it would enable the Greek army to be withdrawn – a step which, if it can be taken without untoward consequences, is in the interests of Greece herself, of the Powers, and of Smyrna.

If Kemal were smashed, the Greek army withdrawn, and Smyrna and its hinterland were then placed under an administration genuinely independent of Greece and Turkey alike, I believe that Turkish public opinion, both in the Smyrna territory and in Turkey, might be reconciled to the new order. Could Turkish opinion be reconciled, the frontier between the Smyrna territory and Turkey need then no longer be held by a military front, and the greatest obstacle to a settlement would be removed.

This is the solution for which I think we ought to work. Let me enumerate the chief points in it in conclusion. They are (1) the enlargement of the Smyrna zone so as to include the whole of the economic hinterland; (2) the maintenance of Mr. Sterghiadis as administrator but not as pro-consul of Greece; (3) the complete independence of this territory from both Greece and Turkey for at least 15 to 20 years; (4) the development within the territory of the

millet system – that is, the proportional representation of non-territorial communities in the Parliament, executive, Civil Service, and gendarmerie: (5) a free hand for the Greek army to destroy Kemal; (6) the withdrawal of the Greek army as soon as this has been accomplished.