
Journal of South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies

Vol. 41, No. 1

FALL 2017



Journal of South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies

Vol. 41, No. 1
Fall 2017

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The *Journal* is published quarterly, and its annual subscription is \$30; U.S. Institutions: \$35; foreign subscription: \$40.

Revisiting the Fire of Izmir

Maxime Gauin*

Introduction

The burning of İzmir (called Smyrna by the Christians at that time), in September 1922, after the final defeat of the Greek forces by the Turkish national movement, is one of the most controversial subjects of the late Ottoman history. There are fewer publications on this subject than about the Armenian issue¹ or about the Greco-Turkish war, however the controversy has been virulent since the very beginning—1922.² Beyond the purely polemical—and political—dimension, the destruction of İzmir seriously undermined the capacity of Turkish economy's recovery during

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¹A discussion of this particularly sensitive topic is beyond the scope of the present paper. For historiographical perspectives, see, among others, Stanford J. Shaw and Ezel Kural Shaw, "The Authors Respond," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, IX-3, October 1978, pp. 388-400; Andrew Mango, "Historiography by Political Committee and Committed Historians: Review Article," *Middle Eastern Studies*, XXV-4, October 1989, pp. 531-562; Jeremy Salt, "The Narrative Gap in Ottoman Armenian History," *Middle Eastern Studies*, XXXIX-1, January 2003, pp. 19-36; Guenter Lewy, *The Armenian Massacres in Ottoman Turkey*, (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2005); Maxime Gauin, "'Proving' a 'Crime against Humanity'?" *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, XXXV-1, March 2015, pp. 141-157; Hakan Yavuz, "A Topography of Positions in the Turkish-Armenian Debate," in Hakan Yavuz and Feroz Ahmad (ed.), *War and Collapse*, (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2016), pp. 541-568.

²For example: Türkkiye Ataöv, *Armenian Falsifications*, (New York: Okey, 2008), pp. 109-123; Engin Berber, *The İzmir Fire*, (İzmir: Ödemi Belediyesi, 2013); Berthe Georges-Gaulis, *La Question turque*, (Paris: Berger-Levrault, 1931), pp. 244-245 and 292; Marjorie Housepian, *Smyrna 1922: The Destruction of a City*, (New York: Newmark Press, 1998); Lysimachos Economos, *The Martyrdom of Smyrna and Eastern Christendom*, (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1922).

Atatürk's period. Atatürk's speech of February 1923 on the economic challenges of Turkey was delivered in İzmir instead of Ankara.

Reciprocally, specialists randomly produced detailed and clear accounts of the event. Vamık D. Volkan and Norman Itzkowitz, as well as journalist Willy Sperco, rejected a responsibility of Atatürk or of the Turkish high command, but are neutral for the rest.³ Distinguished scholars such as Bernard Lewis and Xavier de Planhol prefer to be silent.⁴ According to Jeremy Salt, "if the fire was not accidentally started (as the great fire of that devastated Salonica in 1917 had been), those leaving İzmir had far greater reason to burn it down than those arriving."⁵ And remarkably, in his huge history of the Turkish war of independence, Stanford Jay Shaw does not present any new data on the origins of the fire and does not present any clear conclusion—except one: the Turkish side is not responsible.⁶

Until now, there is no definitive account of the event. The best monograph in a Western language is still Heath Lowry's paper,⁷ published in 1989 and frequently cited during the last quarter century. Indeed, the paper offers very interesting data but is based only on U.S. sources, does not analyse the context of the burning (the Turkish war of independence) and does not provide a definitive conclusion, even if it suggests a primarily Armenian responsibility.

The goal of the present article is to propose a global explanation of the fire and its causes.

I) Background

A) War crimes during the Greek offensives (1919–1921)

Since the very beginning (war of independence, in the 1820s), the Greek nationalism based the application of its designs (Grand Idea) on the ethnic

³Willy Sperco, *Moustapha Kemal Atatürk*, (Paris: Nouvelles éditions latines, 1958), pp. 81–84; Vamık Volkan and Norman Itzkowitz, *The Immortal Atatürk: A Psychobiography*, (Chicago–London: University of Chicago Press, 1984), pp. 197–201.

⁴Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, (New York–Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 254; Xavier de Planhol, *Minorités en Islam. Géographie politique et sociale*, (Paris: Flammarion, 1997), p. 337.

⁵Jeremy Salt, *The Unmaking of the Middle East*, (Berkeley–Los Angeles–London: University of California Press, 2008), p. 78. Similar view in Jorge Blanco Villalta, (*Atatürk*, Ankara: TTK, 1982), p. 324.

⁶Stanford J. Shaw, *From Empire to Republic: the Turkish War of National Liberation, 1918–1923*, (Ankara: TTK, 2000), tome IV, pp. 1723–1740.

⁷Heath Lowry, "Turkish History: On Whose Sources Will it Be Based? A Case Study on the Burning of İzmir," *The Journal of Ottoman Studies*, IX, 1989, pp. 1–29.

cleansing of Muslims—mixed with a violent, bloody, anti-Semitism.⁸ Regardless, whatever could be the precedent expulsions and massacres, the crimes of the Balkan wars (1912–1913) surpassed, by the number of victims, the precedent cases. The most numerous massacres were perpetrated by Bulgarian forces, but the ethnic cleansing in the regions annexed by Greece was by far the most efficient, even more since the expulsions and violence continued in 1914, too.⁹ It is so in perfect continuity with the previous decades that the Greek army landed in Izmir on the eve of 15 May 1919, committing every kind of crime: pillages, rapes, assassinations and massacres.¹⁰

In a personal letter to his minister (sent as an addition to the ordinary reports), Captain Henri Rollin, the head of the French Navy's Intelligence Service for Turkey and Southern Russia, presented precise and serious accusations, based on his personal investigation and backed by three eyewitnesses testimonies. Rollin recalled that he was wounded and made prisoner by the Ottoman Army in 1917. He added that Colonel Fetih Bey, in charge of the prisoners of war in Izmir until 1918, surpassed “what could be expected from the most chivalrous enemy” and was regardless “slaughtered with rifle butts” by Greeks as early as May 15. Rollin pointed to the responsibilities of the “Greek government,” who had sent agents

⁸Justin McCarthy, *Death and Exile. The Ethnic Cleansing of Ottoman Muslims*, (Princeton: Darwin Press, 1995), pp. 10–12; Pierre Oberling, *The Road to Bellapais: The Turkish Cypriot Exodus to Northern Cyprus*, (Boulder–New York: Social Science Monographs/Columbia University Press, 1982), pp. 9–21 and 43–45; Salâhi Sonyel, *Minorities and the Destruction of the Ottoman Empire*, (Ankara: TTK, 1993), pp. 170–185 and 223; Stanford J. Shaw, “Christian anti-Semitism in the Ottoman Empire,” in *Studies in Ottoman and Turkish History. Life with the Ottomans*, (stanbul: The Isis Press, 2000), pp. 515–576.

⁹*Les Atrocités des Grecs en Macédoine*, (Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1914), pp. 71–78, 151–154 and 186–207, <http://www.archive.org/download/reportofinternat00inteiala/reportofinternat00inteiala.pdf>; Comité de la défense nationale ottomane, *Les Atrocités des Grecs en Macédoine*, (stanbul: Ahmed Ihsan & Cie, 1914, http://louisville.edu/a-s/history/turks/coalises_balkaniques_5.pdf ; Justin McCarthy, *Death and Exile...*, pp. 135–177; Salâhi Sonyel, *Minorities and the...*, pp. 276–278. See also Ahmet Efilolu, “The Exodus of Thracian Greeks to Greece in the Post-Balkan War Era,” in Hakan Yavuz and Feroz Ahmad (ed.), *War and Collapse...*, pp. 330–370.

¹⁰SR Marine, Turquie, n° 717, 20 mai 1919, n° 740, 24 mai 1919, Service historique de la défense (SHD), Vincennes, 1 BB7 232; Cuthbert Francis Dixon–Johnson, *The Greeks in Asia Minor*, (London: Cole & C°, 1919); Berthe Georges–Gaulis, *Angora, Constantinople, Londres. Moustafa Kémal et la politique anglaise en Orient*, (Paris : Armand Colin, 1922), pp. 58 and 80; Stanford J. Shaw, *From Empire to...*, tome II, pp. 508–540; Salâhi Sonyel, *Minorities and the...*, pp. 355–368; Mustafa Turan, *Yunan Mezalimi*, (Ankara: Atatürk Ara tırma Merkezi, 2006), pp. 73–95 and passim.

provocateurs weeks before the landing.¹¹ Similarly, in his dispatches of March 23, April 13 and 22, 1919, the French Consul in İzmir, Osmin Laporte, had warned that the actual risk of a bloodbath was a possible Greek landing. In their reports of May 9 and 14, two French officers (one from the Navy, one from the gendarmerie) reached similar conclusions.¹²

According to a U.S. observer who was not very friendly to the Turks, “it is a moderate estimate to say that over 2,000 Turks—men, women and children—were done to death” by Greek forces in spring 1919, including between 400 and 800 (600, according to the Italian Captain G. Fauda) during the first days of occupation.¹³ Anyway, as a result of the pressure exerted by the Western representatives, especially the French, the Greek high command was forced to put on trial a significant number of perpetrators of the crimes committed in İzmir itself during the first days. Among these culprits, twelve Armenians were sentenced, together with 48 Greeks, by the Greek military courts in 1919.¹⁴ Correspondingly, to appease the Turkish population, in 1920, several hundred other Armenian volunteers were fired by the Greek General Paraskevopoulos because of their aggressive attitude vis-à-vis the Turks in western Anatolia; ten were sentenced to death and executed by the Greek military justice, according to the French Navy’s Intelligence Service.¹⁵ The Greek regular army also remained passive in August 1920, when a Turkish unit annihilated an Armenian gang notorious for having committed “the worst excesses” against the Turkish civilians, including the villages that had been previously hostile to the Kemalist movement.¹⁶ In Yalova peninsula, during the year 1921, Armenians participated in the Greek “systematic plan of destruction

¹¹SR Marine, Turquie, n° 774, 3 juin 1919, SHD, 1 BB7 232.

¹²SHD, 16 N 3202 ; Centre des archives diplomatiques de Nantes (CADN), 36 PO/1/42.

¹³William Linn Westermann, “The Armenian Problem and the Disruption of Turkey,” in Edward Mandel House and Charles Seymour (ed.), *What Really Happened At Paris. The Story of the Peace Conference By American Delegates*, (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1921), p. 195, <http://www.archive.org/download/cu31924027876048/cu31924027876048.pdf> ; Mevlüt Çelebi (ed.), *Greek Massacre in Anatolia in Italian Archive Documents*, (Ankara: Atatürk Ara tırma Merkezi, 2010), p. 71. See also Justin McCarthy, *The Turk in America. The Creation of an Enduring Prejudice*, Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2010, pp. 249-256.

¹⁴Arnold J. Toynbee, *The Western Question...*, p. 401.

¹⁵S.R. Marine, Affaires arméniennes, 15 novembre 1920, Archives du ministère des Affaires étrangères, (AMAE), La Courneuve, P 16674.

¹⁶S.R. Marine, Turquie, Dans la région d’Ismidt, 10 août 1920, SHD, 7 N 3211.

of Turkish villages and extinction of the Moslem population”¹⁷ and the Greek army apparently abandoned once again its Armenian volunteers, as at least some of them were put on trial in İstanbul, in front of Ottoman justice.¹⁸ Other Armenian gangs put fire to Turkish villages around Bursa and killed at least dozens of inhabitants in July 1921.¹⁹

It appears that the Greek high command did not hesitate to use, if needed, Armenian nationalists for the destruction and ethnic cleansing, and even to leave to them all the responsibilities. This Armenian participation to the Greek devastation in Western Anatolia was not something completely new. As early as 1905, the Armenian Revolutionary Federation²⁰ plotted to destroy, by explosives, most of the important buildings of İzmir, as well as the railroad bridges, to cut the arrival of any help. The bombs should have exploded at 10:00 p.m., the anniversary day of Abdülhamit II’s accession to throne, to kill the maximum number of both Turks and Greeks and as a result to provoke reprisals on the Armenian civilian populations and eventually a Western military intervention. The plot was discovered just in time by the Ottoman police.²¹

B) *The general devastation during the Greek retreat (1922)*

After the Greek defeats of 1921, it became increasingly evident that the Greek forces could not keep Western Anatolia. Businessman Elzéar Guiffroy, the elected head of the French community in İzmir since 1914, was requested by Paris to make a report about the Greek atrocities. Adding his proper findings to the ones of his compatriots, he submitted his notes to the MFA on July 27, 1922. Guiffroy explained that since the landing of May 1919, the Greek crimes were “countless” and that the accounts published in Western newspapers (for instance the killing of 250 Turks, mostly children, burned alive in the mosque of Karatepe in February 1922) represent only

¹⁷Arnold J. Toynbee, *The Western Question...*, p. 284 (quoting the report of an Entente’s commission). See also Maurice Gehri, *Mission d’enquête en Anatolie (12–22 mai 1921)*, (Genève, 1921) ; and *Atrocités grecques en Turquie. Second livre*, (İstanbul : Ahmed İhsan & Cie, 1921), pp. 9–22, http://louisville.edu/a-s/history/turks/atrocites_grecques_en_turquie.pdf

¹⁸Corps d’occupation de Constantinople — Bulletin de renseignement des 8 et 9 mai 1921, SHD 20 N 1082.

¹⁹Rapports du capitaine Renaudineau, 18 et 19 juillet 1921, SHD, 20 N 1101.

²⁰On the activities of this party until 1915, see Edward J. Erickson, *Ottomans and Armenians. A Study in Counter-Insurgency*, (New York–London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2013), pp. 15–37 and 98–202.

²¹Maxime Gauin, “The Missed Occasion: Successes of the Hamidian Police Against the Armenian Revolutionaries, 1905–1908,” *Review of Armenian Studies*, n° 30, 2014, pp. 121–125.

“a small part of the crimes perpetrated up to now.” Guiffroy gave numerous and precise examples of burned villages (five in the district of Ödemiş only), slaughters (including by “gangs formed of Greeks and Armenians”), plunder, assassinations, “thousands” of arbitrary arrests and inhuman conditions of detention, concluding there was a Greek “policy of extermination” toward “the Turkish element”. He also considered that “without exaggeration,” the number of Turks killed by the Greek forces and their Armenian volunteers since May 1919 was in excess of 150,000, “without counting the deported persons, estimated to be 300,000.”²²

The highpoint of Greco–Armenian devastation took place during the last stage of the Greek retreat, after the battle of August 30. Lord Saint–Davids, administrator of the İzmir–Aydın railroad company, stated during its annual congress, at the end of September 1922: “It is a fact that [the Greek forces] burned Aydın and Nazilli; they put fire to all the villages they passed through,” committing plunder and murder. They did so, added Lord Saint–Davids, by order of the Greek officers and because they knew they would not be able to keep these lands.²³ early in the year 1922, letters of the managers of the Compagnie Smyrne–Cassaba & Prolongements, which substantiated the same conclusions, were published.²⁴ French engineer C. Toureille, a resident in İzmir at that time, confirmed, in a very detailed report (this document seems to be based on Toureille’s personal diary) the systematic plunder and arsons, as well as the recurrence of killings: “In the Turkish houses, the inhabitants were, as far as the flying soldiers could, burned alive, mercilessly: men, women, children.” As late as September 8, added Toureille, an Armeno–Greek gang committed plunder around İzmir, and on September 11–12 September, another gang, purely Greek this time, was putting fire to several villages very close to this city, including Buca.²⁵ Yet, in September, too, Greek regular soldiers, not irregulars, burned a village in the district of Çeşme.²⁶

One of the deepest investigations was carried out by the U.S. Vice–Consul James Loder Park, a former pro–Greek who changed his

²²AMAE, P 1380.

²³« Grave réquisitoire d’un lord anglais contre l’armée grecque », *Le Petit Parisien*, 27 septembre, 1922, p. 3.

²⁴Jean Schlicklin, *Angora. L’aube de la Turquie nouvelle*, (Paris : Berger–Levrault, 1922), pp. 331–334.

²⁵C. Toureille, *Prise de Smyrne par Moustafa Kemal — Incendie de Smyrne par les Grecs et les Arméniens*, pp. 1–2, AMAE, P 1380. Also see, in the same microfilm, *Extraits de lettres reçues de Smyrne*, septembre 1922.

²⁶Report of the governor of İzmir, 18 October 1922, translated in *Documents d’histoire militaire*, No. 93, janvier 1922, p. 185.

minds after his tour in Western Anatolia. Park noticed that the burning of Magnesia/Manisa (90%), Cassaba/Kasaba (90%), Alasher/Alaşehir (70%) and Salihi (65%) “was not desultory, not intermittent, not accidental, but well planned and thoroughly organized”. It was carried out by “incendiary bombs” and gasoline, and accompanied by numerous massacres and rapes.²⁷ The villages around these cities were burned as well,²⁸ as was the Turkish property in the district of Ödemiş in September 1922,²⁹ finishing a work of destruction that had begun months earlier and was described by Elzéar Guiffroy in his previously cited report. Similarly, Near East Relief worker Mark O. Prentiss had “travelled three hundred kilometres in Anatolia,” seen villages Greek soldiers had sacked and burned and “interviewed many old men and boys beaten shot stabbed and girls outraged by Greek soldiers.”³⁰ The killings, arsons and rapes by Greeks are also confirmed by Caleb Frank Gates, director of the Robert College from 1903 to 1932, in his *Memoirs*.³¹ In spite of all the difficulties, wrote Lynn A. Scipio, professor at the Robert College from 1912 to 1943, the Greek forces “did take time to set fire to the many Turkish villages and grain fields—and anything else that would burn.”³²

Even more important for the understanding of the chain of events leading to the incendiary attack of İzmir are the cases of Eskişehir and Bursa. Father Ludovic Marseille, director of the French schools in Eskişehir, sent a detailed report to the Quai d’Orsay, explaining that the Greek army told horrible, false, atrocity stories to the Christians and so forced them to leave the city—despite the attempts of the French to convince them to remain. Then, the Greek army, obeying the order of its officers, burned the city, including the French buildings—unlike the Turkish army, who had left Eskişehir in July 1921 without killing or destroying. Father Marseille’s

²⁷Justin McCarthy, *Death and Exile...*, p. 281. See also Mustafa Turan, *Yunan Mezalimi...*, pp. 201–202.

²⁸Télégramme du colonel Mougin au général Pellé, 8 septembre 1922, AMAE, P 1380 ; Noëlle Roger, *En Asie mineure. La Turquie du Ghazi*, (Paris: Fasquelle, 1930), pp. 210–211.

²⁹Report of the sub-governor of Ödemiş, 13 October 1922, *Documents d’histoire militaire...*, p. 183.

³⁰Dispatch of Mark O. Prentiss to Admiral Bristol, no date (mid–September 1922), Library of Congress (LC), Bristol papers, Container 74, File Smyrna, general situation, 1919, 1922. Two other U.S. reports are quoted in Stanford J. Shaw, *From Empire to...*, tome IV, pp. 1710–1716.

³¹Caleb Frank Gates, *Not to Me Only*, (Princeton–London: Princeton University Press/Oxford University Press, 1940), p. 283.

³²Lynn A. Scipio, *My Thirty Years in Turkey*, (Rindge: Richard R. Smith Publisher, 1955), p. 179.

findings and conclusions were assumed by General Maurice Pellé, High Commissioner in Istanbul.³³ Furious, Raymond Poincaré, President of the ministers' Council and Minister of Foreign Affairs, ordered the French representative in Athens to protest and to state that the French government kept "the right to claim the legitimate reparations for these acts of systematic destruction that none military goal justifies." The protest was forwarded for information, to the British, Italian and U.S. governments.³⁴ The message was sent five days before the burning of İzmir. General Soumila, the Greek officer commanding the forces in Bursa wanted to organize the burning of this city, but the French consular agent, himself an officer also, forced him to cancel the decision, by the threat of a military response; in addition, General Pellé sent 200 men to protect the French-owned Moudania railroad company, to stop the beginning of fire as well as the "violence against the Muslims".³⁵

Correspondingly, Captain Joubert wrote in his report from Moudania, that Anatolian Greeks "deplore" the "devastation" by the Hellenic forces (especially in Eskişehir) and "accuse the people of Athens of not caring about them."³⁶ The French findings are congruent with the U.S. ones: Bristol wrote that "[Greek] villages were burned by the Hellenic Greeks as they retreated making it impossible for refugees to be returned to their homes even after conditions grow quite" and he was informed by the U.S. Navy that "Greek refugees all tell same story: 'Ordered [to] evacuate by

³³Télégrammes du général Pellé au ministère des Affaires étrangères, 8 et 17 septembre 1922 ; Rapport du père Ludovic Marseille, 15 septembre 1922, AMAE, P 1380. See also Noëlle Roger, *En Asie mineure...*, pp. 217–218. On the brilliant career of Pellé, see Ronald Mattatia, « Le général Maurice Pellé », *Bulletin de la SABIX*, 43, 2009, pp. 28–36, <http://sabix.revues.org/179> The absence of Kemalist misdeeds in July 1921 is confirmed by Rapport du capitaine Renaudineau, inspecteur de la gendarmerie ottomane, sur la prise de Kütahya et Eski-Chehir par les troupes hellènes, 23 juillet 1921, SHD, 20 N 1101.

³⁴Télégramme du ministère des Affaires étrangères au représentant français à Athènes, 8 septembre 1922 ; télégramme du ministère aux ambassadeurs à Londres, Rome et Washington, 8 et 9 septembre 1922, AMAE, P 1380.

³⁵Telegram of Sir H. Rumbold to Lord Curzon, September 9, 1922, The National Archives, Kew Gardens, FO 371/254, p. 173 ; Télégramme du général Pellé au ministère des Affaires étrangères, 12 septembre 1922 ; Télégramme du ministère des Affaires étrangères au chargé d'affaires à Washington, 26 septembre 1922, AMAE, P 1380. See also Justin McCarthy, *Death and Exile...*, p. 283, and on the "violence" (Turks burned alive), the telegram of General Nurettin, 14 December 1922, *Documents d'histoire militaire...*, p. 191.

³⁶Rapport de mission du capitaine de frégate Joubert au contre-amiral Dumesnil, 6 septembre 1922, pp. 3–4, SHD, 20 N 1095.

Greek military or priests. Saw towns in flames after departures.' Say fault lies with Hellenic Greeks who burned their villages."³⁷

C) *Armenian war criminals, from Cilicia to İzmir*

The Eastern (then, by January 1919, Armenian) Legion, laboriously created and expanded from 1916 to 1918, and raised some serious discipline problems even before the end of the war.³⁸ The problems increased during the months following the armistice,³⁹ and attained a peak in 1920, provoking the disbanding of this unit by the French government.⁴⁰ A gang of Armenian and Assyrian civilians was sentenced, also in mid-1920, for the massacre of 45 Turks, mostly women and children.⁴¹ Then an Armenian militia was dissolved, because of the dangers which it represented "for the safety of the neighbourhood;" some of its members came from İzmir.⁴² Arson was frequently used by both Armenian legion-

³⁷Mark L. Bristol, Report of operations for week ending 10 September, 1922, part four;

War diary, 19 September 1922; USS Litchfield to Bristol, September 7, 1922 Corrected copy, LC, Bristol papers, containers 4 and 76, File Smyrna, Navy Messages Received 1922.

³⁸Rapport sur la mutinerie du camp des réfugiés du Djébel Moussa, 21 mai 1918 ; Incidents des 16 et 17 mai à Port-Saïd, 23 mai 1918, SHD, 4 H 34, dossier 1.

³⁹Copie de télégramme, colonel commandant troupes françaises Cilicie à Général commandant T.F.L. à Beyrouth, 29 mai 1919 ; Télégramme du général Hamelin au ministère de la Guerre, 22 mars 1919, SHD, 4 H 42, dossier 6 ; Télégrammes du général Hamelin, 2, 25, 26 février, 4, 5 mars 1919 ; Lettre du général Hamelin au ministre de la Guerre, 15 février 1919 ; Lettre du président du Conseil au ministre des Affaires étrangères, 25 février 1919 ; Télégramme de Georges Picot, 19 février 1919, Télégrammes de l'amiral Cassard au ministère de la Marine, 13 février, 1er mars 1919, Lettre du président du Conseil au ministre des Affaires étrangères, 5 avril 1919, AMAE, P 1426. Turkish sources are translated into English in Stanford J. Shaw, "The Armenian Legion and Its Destruction of the Armenian Community of Cilicia," in Türkaya Ataöv (ed.), *Armenians in the Late Ottoman Period*, Ankara: TTK/TBMM, 2001, pp. 155–206 (but Stanford J. Shaw's account of the French reaction is not always accurate).

⁴⁰Année 1920 — Dossier relatif à divers incidents qui ont lieu à la Légion arménienne ; Le général Gouraud à M. le général commandant la 156e division d'infanterie, 25 février 1920 ; Le chef de bataillon Beaujard commandant la Légion arménienne, à M. le général commandant la 1re brigade du Levant, 17 avril 1920 ; Avis du général Dufieux n° 3382/1, 27 avril 1920 ; Télégramme n° 1871/3 du commandant Bezert au général commandant en chef des Armées françaises au Levant, 1er octobre 1920, SHD, 4 H 42, dossier 6 (this file contains many other documents supporting the same views) ; — Lettre du ministre de la Guerre au ministre des Affaires étrangères, 20 mai 1920 ; réponse du ministre des Affaires étrangères, 18 juin ; Le ministre de la Guerre au ministre des Affaires étrangères, 12 juillet, AMAE, P 1426.

⁴¹Capitaine Dromard, Compte-rendu au sujet des affaires de Djamili, 16 juin 1920, CADN, 1SL/1V/154 ; Jugement n° 175/290, 14 août 1920, SHD, 11 J 3202.

⁴²Rapport hebdomadaire, 22–29 septembre 1920, SHD, 4 H 58.

naires and civilians to expel the Muslim populations, especially in Maraş and its vicinity, during the winter of 1920, then in Adana during the summer of the same year; the Armenian arsonists did not even pay attention if the French soldiers were in a place protected from fire.⁴³

The recurrent practice of using incendiaries is important to understand the fire of Izmir fully. Indeed, as early as 1920, fired Armenian legionnaires and civilian Armenians from Cilicia landed in Izmir, without hiding their bitterness. Some of these Cilician Armenians plotted in vain to provoke new attacks by the Greek army against Turks in Izmir.⁴⁴ In addition, during the mass departures of Cilician Armenians, in winter 1921–1922, at least 4,000 of them came to Izmir by Greek ships, and only the British decision to close the access to this city prevented the arrival of new migrants.⁴⁵ In considering that Greece was still at war against the Turks, it does not appear to have been a free, purely generous act of solidarity, without intention to use at least some of these Armenians against the Turks.

II) The Greek command left the job to the Armenian committees

A) *The situation in September 1922: a new context for an announced arson*

Having devastated most of Western Anatolia, the Greek forces were experiencing the practical limits of this scorched earth policy. Indeed, as explained before, the Great Powers' intervention in Bursa, the French one in Mudania, prevented the Greek officers from organizing the destruction of these cities. In the case of İzmir, Paris, London, Rome and Washington had sent military ships to prevent the destruction of the city, the second of the Ottoman Empire and the most important port of Anatolia, where a lot of European and American companies had offices and made lucrative business. In addition, it was no longer possible to displace the Christian population in a short time, since the Greek Navy did not possess sufficient ships for the huge number of refugees and of İzmir's Greeks and Armenians.

⁴³Rapport hebdomadaire, 27 avril–3 mai 1920, SHD, 4 H 58, dossier 1 ; Rapport du général Gouraud à Alexandre Millerand, président du Conseil, 21 juillet 1920, AMAE, P 16774; Maxime Bergès, *La Colonne de Mara et quelques autres récits de l'armée du Levant*, (Paris : La Renaissance du livre, 1924), pp. 56–57, 81–82, 89 and 142–143 ; Paul Bernard, *Six mois en Cilicie*, (Aix-en-Provence : Éditions du Feu, 1929), pp. 71–73, 78, 82, 85, 100 and 110 ; Stanford J. Shaw, "The Armenian Legion...", p. 167.

⁴⁴S.R. Marine, 15 novembre 1920, AMAE, P 16674.

⁴⁵Bulletin de renseignement n° 288, 21–24 décembre 1921, SHD, 4 H 61, dossier 3 ; Commandement supérieur, Levant — Journal des marches et des opérations, 25 novembre 1921, p. 459, SHD, 4 H 47, dossier 1.

The Greek high command could not do in İzmir exactly the same thing as in Eskişehir, but it was out of question for these Greek officers to prevent any imitation of the fires they ordered up to the beginning of September and up to the suburb of İzmir. A few days before the arrival of the Turkish army in İzmir, the French and British admirals, as well as the French, American and Italian consuls, requested Nikolaos Theotokis, the Greek minister of War who was at that time in İzmir, for assurance that the city was not threatened by pillage and arson. Theotokis answered he could not give such assurance.⁴⁶ Roughly at the same time, the Greek High Commissioner in İzmir, convoked himself the Entente's consuls and said that he could not manage the safety of the city "that would be invaded by fugitives which may commit all the excesses."⁴⁷

In addition to the danger of the "fugitives," since June 1922, "it was a known fact" that a Greco-Armenian committee was ready to burn İzmir.⁴⁸ "All the French" residing in the city, including the Consul General Michel Graillet, heard "many times" Greeks and Armenians saying, before the arson, that the city would be burned instead of being left intact to the Turks.⁴⁹ One of these French residents wrote to his diplomates, on September 7, 1922 that "On the other hand, most of the Greek soldiers who are coming here state that they have decided to put fire to Smyrna as they did in Afion [Afyon], Ouchak [Uşak], Alachéir [Alaşehir] and Magnésie [Manisa]."⁵⁰ Such accounts are congruent with the one of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk.⁵¹ Actually, even the two best-known supporters of the Turkish responsibility thesis, U.S. Consul Horton and professor of literature Marjorie Housepian, acknowledge the "Greek threats to burn İzmir," but both fail to discuss further such a crucial point.⁵²

⁴⁶Télégramme du consul Michel Graillet au ministère des Affaires étrangères, 6 septembre 1922, AMAE, P 1380 ; USS Litchfield to Bristol, September 6, 1922, LC, Bristol papers, container 76, File Smyrna, Navy Messages Received 1922. See also Sean McMeekin, *The Ottoman Endgame*, (London: Allen Lane, 2015), pp. 471–472.

⁴⁷Bulletin de renseignement n° 376, 3–5 septembre 1922, SHD, 4 H 62, dossier 3.

⁴⁸C. Toureille, *Prise de Smyrne par Moustafa Kemal — Incendie de Smyrne par les Grecs et les Arméniens*, p. 5, AMAE, P 1380.

⁴⁹Rapport de l'amiral Dumesnil, 28 septembre 1922, AMAE, P 1380. See also Noëlle Roger, *En Asie mineure...*, pp. 216–217.

⁵⁰Extraits de lettres reçues de Smyrne, AMAE, P 1380.

⁵¹Telegram dated 30 September 1922, in İsmet Görgülü, *Atatürk'ten Ermeni Konusu*, (Ankara– İstanbul: Bilgi Yayınevi, 2006), pp. 327–328.

⁵²Marjorie Housepian, *Smyrna 1922...*, p. 257.

B) *The evidence for the Armenian and Greek responsibilities*

The idea of an accidental fire, an explanation suggested by some respectable scholars,⁵³ must be dismissed. Indeed, Paul Grescovich, the chief of the İzmir fire brigade since 1910, noticed the following:

During the first week of September there had been an average of five fires per day with which his crippled department had to cope. In his opinion most of these fires were caused by carelessness, but some undoubtedly were of incendiary origin. The average number of fires in a normal year, he said, would be about one in ten days, and the increase to the five a day seemed significant.⁵⁴

More importantly, there were several major fires only during the afternoon of September 13: The famous fire in the Armenian cathedral was not the single origin of the destruction of the city. Such a fact can't be reconciled with the hypothesis of an accidental fire.⁵⁵

Regarding the establishment of the responsibilities, there are several crucial documents. The most important one, published by the Turkish side as early as 1922, is the report of Paul Grescovich. Grescovich unequivocally concluded that Armenians and Greeks, not Turks, put fire to the city.⁵⁶ The next document is a rather long report of Mark O. Prentiss (mentioned earlier in this paper), largely based on Grescovich's findings. In particular, Prentiss explained that, according to his statements, the chief of the İzmir fire brigade

had seen two Armenian priests escorting several thousand men, women and children from the Armenian schools and Dominican Churches where they had taken refuge down to the quays. When he presently went into these institutions, he found petroleum-soaked refuse ready for torch. [...] His own firemen, as well as Turkish guards, had shot down many Armenian young men disguised either as woman or as Turkish irregular soldiers, who were caught setting fires during Tuesday night [September 12] and Wednesday [September 13] morning.⁵⁷

⁵³For example: Lord Kinross, *Atatürk*, (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1965), pp. 324–325.

⁵⁴The Hitherto Untold Story of the Smyrna Fire Told by Mark O. Prentiss, American Representative of the Near East Relief. Armenians, not Turks, Set the Fire. Evidence of Smyrna Fire Chief Revealed, LC, Bristol papers, container 38 (hereafter, Prentiss report). The full document is reproduced in appendix to Heath Lowry, "Turkish History: On...", pp. 21–27.

⁵⁵Télégrammes du général Pellé au ministère des Affaires étrangères, 21 et 23 septembre 1922, AMAE, P 1 380; Berthe Georges-Gaulis, *La Question turque*, (Paris: Berger-Levrault, 1931), pp. 244–245 and 292.

⁵⁶*Report of Mr. Grescovich Commander of the Smyrna Fire Brigade on the Great fire in Smyrna*, (stanbul, 1922).

⁵⁷Prentiss report, p. 5.

This Prentiss report was published in January 1923 by several U.S. newspapers. In the title of the draft Prentiss had written that the fire was lit by “Armenians and Greeks”. “And Greeks” was scratched. Türkkaya Ataöv suggests that the scratch was done by a Greek American.⁵⁸ Yet, in the published version of this text, the title does not include “and Greeks” and the article puts the blame on “Armenians”.⁵⁹ Prentiss worked for the Near East Relief, which was for years extremely helpful for Armenians. He had no reason to distort the facts against them.

The third crucial document was written by Admiral Charles Dumesnil, chief of the French Navy for the Near East. Dumesnil knew Anatolia since 1914, when he made an inspection tour just before the outbreak of the First World War, and knew the Turkish army since 1915, when he participated in the Çanakkale (Dardanelles) battle.⁶⁰ Dumesnil’s final report on the İzmir fire⁶¹ is an exemplary, Cartesian, reasoning. Regarding the Turkish regular army, Dumesnil argued that this force had an exceptional leadership, who had imposed satisfactory discipline. Moreover, Mustafa Kemal (Atatürk) and İsmet (İnönü) settled close to the French Consulate the day before the great fire; they had to leave quickly. About the Turkish irregulars, Dumesnil observed that they certainly committed crimes, mostly in İzmir, but it was about plunder; nobody complained about arsons. In addition, the Turkish regular soldiers and officers fought this practice of plunder, including by summary executions. After the beginning of the fire, which was put in several places during the same afternoon (a fact proving “an organization that can’t be attributed to Turkish plunderers”), the Turkish army also fought the fire. Arguing for an Armeno–Greek responsibility, Dumesnil pointed to the “permanent propaganda,” for months, advocating the destruction of the city in case of a Turkish capture, and, more concretely, the presence “in the Greek and above all in the Armenian quarter” of numerous “ammunition depots” as well as “flammable or incendiary materials”. The admiral also slammed the “hearsays,” giving the example of testimonies provided by apparently irreproachable people (French monks), who regardless were totally refuted by his immediate, direct checking.

⁵⁸Türkkaya Ataöv, *Armenian Falsifications...*, p. 113.

⁵⁹“Armenians, Not Turks, Set Smyrna Ablaze Relief Worker Declares,” *The San Antonio Express*, January 22, 1923.

⁶⁰Charles Dumesnil, *Souvenirs de guerre d'un vieux croiseur (1914–1915)*, (Paris : Plon–Nourrit, 1922).

⁶¹Qui sont les auteurs de l'incendie ?, 28 septembre 1922, AMAE, P 1380. See also his « Incendie de la ville de Smyrne », 22 septembre 1922, in the same microfilm and his interview to *Le Matin*, 29 septembre 1922, p. 3.

After having hesitated for few days, the French Consul in İzmir, Michel Graillet, totally endorsed the views of Admiral Dumesnil, concluding that the Turkish army had no responsibility in the fire, and that the arsonists were “Armenians and Greeks”. His last word deserves to be quoted: “Lies and fantasy can do nothing against the reality of the facts, and the imagination is even more vivid as these are people who promptly fled Smyrna.”⁶² Likewise, the special envoy of *Le Petit Parisien* also put the blame on “Armenians and Greeks” as a result of his investigation in İzmir.⁶³

The director of the Jewish school of Tire wrote on September 29, 1922:

“To make matters worse, Smyrna did not escape to the catastrophe: more than the half of the city was burned by the Armenians, another factor aggravating the misfortune of Jewish and other refugees.”⁶⁴

Correspondingly, the missionary Alexander MacLachlan, president of the International College, made a personal investigation and put the blame on “Armenian terrorists” who “were attempting to bring Western intervention.”⁶⁵ In the same way, the journalist of *Le Matin* in İzmir concluded his investigation in putting the blame on Armenians solely.⁶⁶ However, French engineer Toureille, previously mentioned, without contesting at all the presence of Armenian arsonists, stressed more the Greek responsibilities.⁶⁷ The only way to reconcile all these sources is to conclude that, having planned the destruction of İzmir, the Greek army eventually left the biggest part of the execution to the Armenian committees, especially the Armenians coming from Cilicia. The presence of such elements is confirmed by the testimony of an anti-Turkish Armenian from İzmir, who affirmed that the Turks killed during the fire

⁶²Télégramme au ministère des Affaires étrangères, 22 septembre 1922 ; Lettre au ministère des Affaires étrangères, 26 septembre 1922, AMAE, P 1380. These reports of Graillet are conveniently ignored in Hervé Georgelin, *La Fin de Smyrne. Du cosmopolitisme aux nationalismes*, (Paris: CNRS, 2005).

⁶³« Une journée dans les ruines de Smyrne », *Le Petit Parisien*, 28 septembre 1922, p. 3.

⁶⁴Henri Nahum (ed.), *La Grande Guerre et la guerre gréco-turque vue par les instituteurs de l'Alliance israélite universelle d'Izmir*, (Istanbul : Les éditions Isis, 2003), p. 71.

⁶⁵Joseph L. Grabill, *Protestant diplomacy and the Near East: Missionary influence on American policy, 1810–1927*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1971), p. 263. On the desire of Armenian extremists to attract attention at the beginning of 1920s, see also Christopher Gunn, “Getting Away with Murder,” in Hakan Yavuz and Feroz Ahmad, *War and Collapse...*, pp. 896–917.

⁶⁶« Ce sont les Arméniens qui allumèrent l'incendie en abandonnant leur quartier », *Le Matin*, 20 septembre 1922, p. 1.

⁶⁷C. Toureille, *Prise de Smyrne par Moustafa Kemal — Incendie de Smyrne par les Grecs et les Arméniens*, pp. 1–2, AMAE, P 1380.

“2,000 Armenians” from Cilicia⁶⁸ and by the investigation of Arnold Toynbee, who blamed “a secret Armenian organization (promoted not by the local Armenian community but by embittered exiles from Cilicia).”⁶⁹

Except for the reference to the geographical origin, this thesis was mentioned as early as 1922 by U.S. Navy officer A. J. Hepburn, who allowed for this explanation.⁷⁰ Regarding the preparation by Greek officers, it is confirmed by the fact that, on 13 September, the Turkish command “found all the rubber pipes of the fire brigade completely cut to pieces, obviously by intention.”⁷¹ It shows a military-minded preparation of the fire.

Key documents may exist in the archives of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation in Watertown, Massachusetts, but they are not available: The requests of the author of these lines were left unanswered in 2014.⁷²

III) The Turkish army and irregulars are not guilty

A) Background

In a report of June 25, 1920, Commander Labonne, chief of the French army’s Intelligence service in Turkey from 1918 to 1920, wrote that “nowhere [in the Kemalist-dominated regions] is the Christian population threatened.”⁷³ Labonne did not like the Kemalists, and the Kemalists did not like him.⁷⁴ Correspondingly, Bristol remarked in the end of November 1919 that “Comparatively speaking, the conditions throughout other parts of Asia Minor are quieter than before; this, in spite of reports from British and Armenian quarters crying ‘wolf’”⁷⁵ an expression also used by Labonne. In Kayseri in 1919, French officer Jacques Lemaigre-Dubreuil

⁶⁸« Les réfugiés de Smyrne à Marseille — Émouvants récits de l’incendie », *Le Petit Parisien*, 21 septembre 1922, p. 3.

⁶⁹Article in *Current History*, July 1923, quoted in E. Alexander Powell, *The Struggle for Power in Moslem Asia*, (London: John Long, 1925), p. 137.

⁷⁰The last two pages of Hepburn report are reproduced in appendix to Heath Lowry, “Turkish History. On...”, pp. 28–29.

⁷¹Halidé Edib (Halide Edip), *The Turkish Ordeal*, (New York–London: The Century C°, 1928), p. 376.

⁷²Maxime Gauin, “The Turkish–Armenian dispute: Who has something to hide?,” *Daily Sabah*, October 14, 2014.

⁷³Situation politique en Asie mineure, 25 juin 1920, p. 2, SHD, 7 N 3210, dossier 2. See also Le mouvement nationaliste, n° 11, 16 novembre 1919, pp. 4–5, 7 N 3210, dossier 1.

⁷⁴In addition to the previously mentioned reports, containing acid remarks on Kemal, see Lettre du général Franchet d’Espèrey au ministre de la Guerre, 28 juin 1920, SHD, 7 N 3210.

⁷⁵Report of operations for week ending November 23, 1919, LC, Bristol papers, container 1, file November 1919.

did not notice any violence by Turks against Armenians,⁷⁶ and three years later, Jean Schlicklin, correspondent of *Le Petit Parisien* in Turkey, strongly protested, after a deep investigation, against the “slanders” spread against the Kemalists about the treatment of Christians in Anatolia.⁷⁷ The best known accusation of a “massacre of Armenians” by Kemalists (in Kars, north-eastern Anatolia, after the capture of this city in October 1920) is an invention, and the representative of the Near East Relief of Kars testified that there was no massacre.⁷⁸ Even the former Prime Minister of Armenia, Alexander Khatissian, told French Colonel Corbel that the Turkish troops were “disciplined” and did not mention any killing.⁷⁹ Actually, “the Armenian runaways themselves admit the Turkish troops did not commit atrocities this time.”⁸⁰ Likewise, in Hacin (southern Anatolia), the fierce fight between Armenians and Turks that began because of the violence of nationalist Armenians against Turkish civilians, and where the Turkish side eventually won ended by the “massacre” of only “some fighters” and of the top leadership, not by a mass killing—according to the Armenian National Union.⁸¹

Regarding the Greco-Turkish war, the Turkish army was well disciplined and the command forbid any act of reprisal.⁸² As late as 1922, even a representative of a country still in a virtual state of war with the Turks, Sir W. Tyrrell, acknowledged a few days after the entrance of the Kemalists in Izmir, the “excesses committed by the Greek troops” but was “very struck

⁷⁶Lettre du lieutenant Lemaigre-Dubreuil au haut-commissaire français à stanbul, 13 septembre 1919, CADN, 36 PO/1/10.

⁷⁷Jean Schlicklin, *Angora. L'aube de...*, pp. 149–171 and 183–193.

⁷⁸Heath Lowry, “American Observers in Anatolia circa 1920: The Bristol Papers,” in *Armenians in the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey (1912–1926)*, Istanbul: Tasvir Press, 1984, pp. 42–58 (I personally checked the key documents used in this paper); Jean Schlicklin, *Angora. L'aube de...*, pp. 147–149. The Barton-Bristol correspondence on this affair has been published and is now available online: http://www.ataa.org/reference/bristol_letter.html http://www.ataa.org/reference/barton_letter.html

⁷⁹Défaite de l'armée arménienne (signature omise) ; Résumé de la conversation entre A. Khatissian et le colonel Corbel, documents transmis au secrétaire général du ministère des Affaires étrangères le 6 janvier 1921 par Paul Lépissier, délégué à Trabzon du haut-commissaire français à stanbul, AMAE, P 16675.

⁸⁰La situation en Orient au 1er décembre 1920, SHD, 1 BB7 236.

⁸¹Capitaine Taillardat, Protection des minorités chrétiennes de Cilicie, 11 décembre 1920, pp. 5–6, CADN, 1SL/1V/144.

⁸²Berthe Georges-Gaulis, *Angora, Constantinople, Londres...*, pp. 32, 69–70, 118, 124, 173 and passim; Arnold J. Toynbee, *The Western Question...*, pp. 239–240.

by the [good] conduct of the Kemalist army.”⁸³ Similarly, at the beginning of winter 1922–1923, the International Red Cross, which had conducted an investigation in Anatolia at the request of the British government, published a report that was “extremely severe for these so-called Christian Greeks” but praised the Kemalists and the Turkish Red Crescent.⁸⁴ General Maurice Pellé, the French High Commissioner in Istanbul, wrote on September 8, i.e. just before the entrance of the Kemalist troops in Izmir:

Since a long time, no news about a Kemalist massacre arrived here from Smyrna, or from any other place of Anatolia, neither from the English and French intelligence services, nor from the ecumenical patriarchate, always waiting for such facts. Contrariwise, the reality of the systematic devastations perpetrated by the Greek troops is established by European witnesses.⁸⁵

Assuming these findings, the Quai d’Orsay wrote on September 19 that “no Greek was molested” by the Turks “during the retreat” of the Greek army.⁸⁶ Indeed, as the Ankara government repeatedly told the French representative, Colonel Mougin, the national government wanted to keep “clean hands” in the perspective of the peace conference.⁸⁷ And it was meaningless to burn properties just after having captured a city.⁸⁸

B) Horton–Housepian: Reconciling the facts with assumptions

Marjorie Housepian alleges that US Vice–Consul Barnes “had seen Turkish soldiers pouring gasoline liberally along the street in front of the consulate, was meanwhile working feverishly to save the consular records”.⁸⁹ The compilation of American reports by Hepburn actually indicates:

The fire continued to burn throughout the night though considerably diminished. Several separate fires were observed to start in locations distant from the general conflagration, plainly indicating incendiarism. The Passport office, located upon the North pier of the inner harbor, burned after midnight with many heavy explosions, probably caused by gasoline, as a number of drums had been observed in and near this building a day or two previously. This building was only a few hundred yards from the “Litchfields” anchorage, and the actions of the person that fired it were plainly

⁸³Télégramme de l’ambassadeur français à Londres, 12 septembre 1922, AMAE, P 1380. See also Report on the Turkish Nationalist Offensive in Anatolia by Major H. G. Howell, September 15, 1922, FO 424/255, pp. 22–24.

⁸⁴Dépêche de l’ambassadeur français à Washington, 2 janvier 1923, AMAE, P 1380.

⁸⁵Télégramme du général Pellé au ministère des Affaires étrangères, 8 septembre 1922, AMAE, P 1380.

⁸⁶AMAE, P 1380.

⁸⁷Télégrammes du colonel Mougin au général Pellé, 7 et 14 septembre 1922, AMAE P 1380.

⁸⁸Heath Lowry, “Turkish History. On...”, p. 4.

⁸⁹Marjorie Housepian, *Smyrna 1922...*, pp. 68 and 262.

observed by Vice-Consul Barnes from the forecastle, although the distance was too great to allow of any sort of identification. A number of Turkish troops were stationed at the inshore end of the building at the time.

Barnes also sent this self-explanatory cable, conveniently not used by Ms. Housepian:

American press accounts of the Smyrna irregularities arriving here contain gross exaggerations and untruths. Impossible to say definitely number of Greeks and Armenians killed—perhaps 2,000. Atrocities committed in the interior by Greeks and Armenians outstrip those committed by the Turks in Smyrna in savagery and wanton destruction. Majority of the Americans here believe Smyrna fired by Armenians.⁹⁰

Correspondingly, Ms. Housepian alleges that Kemal said to Dumesnil, after the fire, that the destruction of the city was “disagreeable” but “of secondary importance”⁹¹—and she is followed, as usual, by the novelist Giles Milton.⁹² Yet, the French accounts say the reverse. Dumesnil wrote to the Quai d’Orsay that Kemal was “morally and materially” struck by the arson. Neither “secondary importance” nor any expression of this kind appears in his reports, dealing with Kemal’s position,⁹³ and there is nothing like “of secondary importance” in the Turkish account of the same conversation.⁹⁴ Consul Michel Graillet, who also met Kemal, reported, about the Turks: “Their regret to see this wealth escape is obvious.”⁹⁵ Neither Ms. Housepian nor Mr. Milton made any research in the French archives; Ms. Housepian mentions Consul Michel Graillet one time, without even giving his name and Mr. Milton also mentions him one time, misspelling his name (“Grillet”).⁹⁶ Mr. Milton pretends to rely on French sources, but among his references, at the end of his book, not a single French source is provided, for the relevant pages. Even more strikingly, he fails to mention the name of Admiral Dumesnil (or General Pellé) in his more than 420–pages book. The most important witness for the allegation against the Turkish side, in the books of Ms. Housepian, Mr. Milton and other publications, is American Consul George Horton. As it has been seen already, Horton’s

⁹⁰Heath Lowry, “Turkish History. On...”, p. 14.

⁹¹Marjorie Housepian, *Smyrna 1922...*, p. 178.

⁹²Giles Milton, *Paradise Lost. Smyrna 1922: The Destruction of Islam’s City of Tolerance*, (London: Sceptre, 2009), p. 311. Same error in George W. Gawrych, *The Young Atatürk*, London–New York: I. B. Tauris, 2013, p. 206.

⁹³Télégramme de l’amiral Dumesnil au ministère de la Marine, 28 septembre 1922, AMAE, P 1380.

⁹⁴İsmet Görgülü, *Atatürk’ten Ermeni Konusu...*, pp. 325–326.

⁹⁵Télégramme du consul Graillet au ministère des Affaires étrangères, 23 septembre 1922, AMAE, P 1380.

⁹⁶Giles Milton, *Paradise Lost...*, p. 230 (same error in the index).

conclusions are in contradiction even with the ones of his deputy. Moreover, Horton's racist prejudices are quite obvious. He considered the Turks to be "the lowest Mohammedan intellectually, with none, or at least few, of the graces and the accomplishments of civilization, with no cultural history." The Turk "is perhaps the only example of a great and scientifically warlike nation that is great in nothing else. He destroys but cannot construct;" he is "the only branch of Mohammedan faith which has never made any contribution to the progress of civilization." That is why the title of Horton's book, *The Blight of Asia* refers to the Turkish people.⁹⁷ Remarkably, it was written years after the Izmir fire, when the Kemalist revolution was regarded with great admiration all over the world.

More specifically, for the case of the burning fire, Dumesnil reported to the Quai d'Orsay "a suspicion that our Consul General [Michel Graillet] is not far from sharing:"

On September 12, the Consul General of the United States, who remained very quiet, and kept in close contact with his colleagues, ordered suddenly the departure of all the American citizens [underlined by Dumesnil].

The Admiral, who expresses the same "suspicion" toward the British Consul (who evacuated his co-nationals as early as September 3), remarks that the information sources of Horton were Armenians, the ones of his British colleagues were Greeks, and as a result, wonders if the diplomats "knew in advance the danger to the city because of the Armenian or Greek arsonist organizations."⁹⁸ As a result, there are good reasons to think that Horton falsely attributed the responsibility of Izmir's destruction not only because of his racism against the Turks and his love for the Greek and Armenian nationalisms, but also to hide his own responsibility, as he avoided warning any authority about the Greco-Armenian gangs.

In such a perspective, the strongest indictment against Horton's reliability for the Izmir fire can perhaps be taken from his own words. Horton, in a cable quoted and assumed by Ms. Housepian,⁹⁹ asked (my emphasis):

In the interests of humanity and for the safety of American interests to mediate with the Angora government for amnesty sufficient to allow the Greek forces to evacuate. *Amnesty will avoid possible destruction of Smyrna.*

⁹⁷George Horton, *The Blight of Asia*, (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill C°, 1926), pp. 209 and 255.

⁹⁸Rapport de l'amiral Dumesnil, 28 septembre 1922, AMAE, P 1380. Lou Ureneck, *Smyrna september 1922*, New York: CCCO, 2016, relies on Horton but ignores the findings of Dumesnil, Graillet and Grescovich.

⁹⁹Marjorie Housepian, *Smyrna 1922...*, p. 111.

If the Turks really were the abominable and congenital barbarians described by Horton in his book, how could an amnesty have “avoided the destruction of Smyrna”? On the contrary, if the arsonists were Armenians and Greeks an amnesty and an orderly departure of the most compromised people would—perhaps—have avoided such destruction.

C) *The actual behaviour of the Turkish forces and authorities*

Even John Clayton, an American journalist who accused Turks for the İzmir fire, wrote that, during the first two days following the entrance of the Kemalist army in İzmir, the military discipline was “excellent” and there were not “any massacres,” but a few isolated murders.¹⁰⁰ That is confirmed by a French witness: “The Turks did not massacre Greeks, as Greeks had done to Turks in May 1919.”¹⁰¹ Likewise, Consul Graillet testified that “the correction of the Kemalist troops was perfect” on September 9: “Admiral Dumesnil and I had only to enjoy our first relations with the command.” During the night, the first pillages took place, and as a result of the protests, “patrols browse the city manage to refrain a bit the pillage.”¹⁰² U.S. Navy officer A. J. Hepburn also telegraphed to Bristol:

Intention of authorities maintain order cannot be questioned and their measures are efficient. Am officially informed general patrol of city to suppress all street traffic going into effect immediately special troops starting protect refugees. Proclamation of Mustafa Kemal sentencing death to any Turkish soldiers molesting non-combatants.¹⁰³

The slight difference between this version and the one of Graillet can be explained by a better repression in some part of the city, especially the European quarter. Regardless, Dumesnil explained that “precise testimonies” demonstrate that the Turkish army fought against the pillage, including in killing irregulars surprised in looting.¹⁰⁴ Such facts completely contradict the poorly substantiated allegation of Ms. Housepian, charging the Turkish army with having at least allowed the pillage.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁰Lysimachos (Economos, *The Martyrdom of...*, p. 19. See also Noëlle Roger, *En Asie Mineure...*, pp. 215–216.

¹⁰¹Visite de M. Armand Dorville, 22 septembre 1922, AMAE, P 1380.

¹⁰²Télégramme du consul Graillet au ministère des Affaires étrangères, 26 septembre 1922, AMAE, P 1380.

¹⁰³A. J. Hepburn, on USS Litchfiel, to Bristol, September 9, 1922, LC, Bristol papers, Container 76, File Smyrna — Navy Messages Received 1922.

¹⁰⁴Amiral Dumesnil, Qui sont les auteurs de l'incendie ?, 28 septembre 1922, AMAE, P 1380.

¹⁰⁵Marjorie Housepian, *Smyrna 1922...*, pp. 189–190.

The investigations of Dumesnil and Graillet showed that the Turkish army did its best to fight the fire.¹⁰⁶ That is congruent with the testimonies of Prentiss and Grescovich. Prentiss even gives this detail: The Turkish army helped the wounded irrespective of their ethnicity, even Greek and Armenian wounded people were rescued.¹⁰⁷ Similarly, the director of a Jewish school wrote on September 18: “It is sufficient for you to know that if the city was not completely destroyed by fire, it is thanks to the Turkish army, who could arrive in time.”¹⁰⁸ The Jewish teachers’ account of the Turkish war of independence do not hide the misdeeds of the Muslim irregulars; if any doubt were in their mind about the responsibility, it would surely have been mentioned. Rarely mentioned but very important is the fact that the fire was overcome by the joint intervention of the Turkish army and Izmir’s fire brigade as early as 14 September; only the wind gave a new power to the fire, which devastated the European quarter.¹⁰⁹ Correspondingly, even an article of the London *Times* allowing for the responsibility of Turkish irregulars indicates:

The Turks failed to get the fire under, in spite of the employment of large numbers of troops, but they are not reported to have shown any sympathy with incendiaries or looters, whether Turk or non-Turk, who were shot at sight.¹¹⁰

The thesis of a personal responsibility of Nurretin (Nurredine) Paşa, exposed by Norman Stone, is not conclusive: “Nurretin, in any event an embittered, not to say maddened, man, who had lost his sons in this war, probably decided to prevent any reconquest.”¹¹¹ At first, Nurretin was not so “maddened”. He accepted the mediation of the Catholic bishop of Izmir, on 12 September: Christian insurgents left their weapons, and came to the European quarter under the surveillance of the bishop and of the police. The next day, in the morning, he published a communiqué calling for calm, ensuring the safety of the Christians, and demanding only the

¹⁰⁶“Télégramme du consul Graillet au ministère des Affaires étrangères, 26 septembre 1922; télégramme du ministre des Affaires étrangères au chargé d’affaires de France à Washington, 26 septembre 1922 ; Amiral Dumesnil, Qui sont les auteurs de l’incendie ?, 28 septembre 1922, AMAE, P 1380.

¹⁰⁷“Relief Man Tells Tragedy,” *The New York Times*, 18 September 1922, p. 1; “Hasten Evacuation of Smyrna Hordes,” *The New York Times*, 27 September 1922, p. 1.

¹⁰⁸Henri Nahum (ed.), *La Grande guerre...*, p. 68.

¹⁰⁹« Ce sont les Arméniens qui allumèrent l’incendie en abandonnant leur quartier », *Le Matin*, 22 septembre 1922, p. 1.

¹¹⁰“The Fate of Smyrna,” *The Times*, 16 September 1922, p. 8.

¹¹¹Norman Stone, *Turkey: a Short History*, (London: Thames & Hudson, 2010), p. 151.

disarmament of the rebels.¹¹² Similarly, he participated in the appeasement of the British army, just before the fire,¹¹³ and his harshness in the suppression of Greek insurrections in north-eastern Anatolia in 1921 should not be exaggerated.¹¹⁴ Second, if the goal was to “prevent any reconquest,” why did the first fire take place in the Armenian quarter, namely in the farthest from the sea, and why were some of the most important parts of the port facility not burned or dynamited?

Eventually, the accusations of “massacres” against the Turkish forces must be corrected with impartial investigations. As observed by Admiral Bristol:

I told him [Major C. C. Davis, special Red Cross worker attached to the İstanbul chapter of the American Red Cross] that our officers from their continual patrol of the city before and after the fire came to the conclusion that the number of deaths probably didn't exceed 2,000. These officers had counted the dead in the street as they made the rounds and they made the rounds very frequently night and day. I pointed out to him that on one road particularly the same bodies laid there for several days, and was the same person, the number of the dead counted would multiply and yet would be the same bodies.¹¹⁵

Out of these 2,000 deaths, 500 were civilians of all origins who were accidentally drowned as a result of the movement of panic during the fire, and 500 others were Armenians and Greeks killed with weapons in hands, according to Admiral Dumesnil.¹¹⁶ Considering that Turkish soldiers—and civilians¹¹⁷—were murdered, too, in İzmir, it means that the actual figure for the victims of reprisals by Turkish irregulars is less than 1,000.

¹¹²« Les réfugiés de Smyrne en France », *Le Temps*, 22 septembre, 1922, p. 2.

¹¹³Telegram of Admiral Osmond Brock to Admiralty, September 11, 1922, FO 371/254, pp. 187-188; Harry N. Howard, *The Partition of Turkey: A Diplomatic History, 1913-1923*, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press), 1931, pp. 323-324. See also the letter of Kemal (Atatürk) to Admiral Brock reproduced in Gotthard Jäschke, “Mustafa Kemal'in Amiral Brock'a Mektubu,” *Belleten*, XXXVI-144, October 1972, p. 538.

¹¹⁴Letter of Mary Caroline Holmes to Admiral Bristol, May 29, 1922, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, RG 59, M 353, reel 45 (867.4016/708); Larry Rue, “Near East Finds Kurd Atrocities a Myth,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, May 19, 1922, p. 4; Jean Schlicklin, *Angora. L'aube de...*, pp. 183-193 ; Stéphane Yerasimos, « La question du Pont-Euxin (1912-1923) », *Guerres mondiales et conflits contemporains*, n° 153, janvier 1989, pp. 32-33.

¹¹⁵Amiral Mark Bristol, War Diary, September 25, 1922, LC, Bristol papers, container 4.

¹¹⁶Émile Wetterlé, *En Syrie avec le général Gouraud*, (Paris: Flammarion, 1924), pp. 59-61.

¹¹⁷« Une journée dans les ruines de Smyrne », *Le Petit Parisien*, 28 septembre 1922, p. 3.

Conclusion

An overview of the arguments and sources demonstrate the innocence of the Kemalist authorities in the fire of İzmir. Their actual fault was the failure to destroy in time the Armeno–Greek gangs of arsonists. It is exemplified by “Lieutenant–Colonel Baki Bey, head of Nationalist military intelligence, [who] was asleep in the neighbourhood at the time when the fire started, and had only just managed to escape, half–dressed.”¹¹⁸ This failure is probably the reason why there is no mention of the incendiary in the *Speech* (1927) of Kemal Atatürk. The İzmir fire is not an accident at all; it is the result of a historical process, the conjunction of several factors:

- 1) The Armenian nationalist activities in the city at least since 1905;
- 2) The Armenian nationalists’ participation in the Greek war crimes, especially arsons, as early as 1919, and the Greek command’s choice to leave in some cases, the responsibilities for the destruction and other crimes to these Armenians;
- 3) The arrival in İzmir of additional Armenian extremist elements in 1920 and 1921;
- 4) The Greek high command’s choice of a scorched earth policy in 1922;
- 5) The impossibility to implement with mostly Greek arsonists the plan for the destruction of İzmir.

¹¹⁸Salâhi Sonyel, *Turkey’s Struggle for Liberation and the Armenians*, (Ankara: SAM Papers, 2001), p. 207.

Journal of South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies

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ISBN 978-0-87723-160-8



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