

## THE GENOCIDE OF THE GREEKS IN ASIA MINOR

*Athanasios Karathanassis*

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The intention of the present essay is to concisely portray, in toto, the events that took place in Asia Minor during the short period of one month, that of September 1922. These events undoubtedly constitute one of the most phenomenal Genocides that humanity had ever before experienced. Greek and foreign observers and eyewitnesses of the events set down all that happened during a period of only one month on the western coastline of Asia Minor called Ionia and Aiolia. That month, starting from August 27<sup>th</sup> and lasting until September 30<sup>th</sup> 1922, was the most tragic one in the history of the Hellenism of Asia Minor. Along with the entrance of the Tsetes<sup>1</sup> of Behlivan, on the night of August 27<sup>th</sup>, came a series of murders, pillaging and rapes against the Hellenic element of Smyrna that was expanded on precisely the following day, primarily in the laic districts of the city; further on, during the two following days, August 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup>, the slaughtering and pillaging continued throughout all the Hellenic districts in the suburbs of Smyrna.

In those two days the Turkish regular army had also entered the city, whereas, on the night of August 27<sup>th</sup> to the 28<sup>th</sup> the Metropolitan of Smyrna Chrysostomos had also found tragic death. On August 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> until the 31<sup>st</sup>, terrorism was accentuated all over Smyrna, whereas, starting already from August 27<sup>th</sup>, more than 200.000 (or 300.000 according to others) refugees were already gathered on the city's quay. Many of them had taken shelter in Panionios' football field, whereas others, approximately 20.000 people, were in the suburbs of Smyrna, in the mountains of the Taurus, Agios Konstantinos, Mersinli, Agios Voukolos, hundreds of Greeks were

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<sup>1</sup> Tsetes: irregular soldiers

slaughtered. Only in the district of Tepetziki, 450 men, 300 women and 66 babies were killed. On August 31<sup>st</sup>, which was a Wednesday, the arson of Smyrna commenced and in three days all of the Hellenic districts were burnt down. The Director of Y.M.C.A. at Smyrna, E. Fischer, wrote that the fire was expanded in an extensive part of Smyrna and also noted that thousands of Greeks were trying to save themselves at the city's quay. E. Driault wrote that thousands of unfortunate people had jumped into the sea to save themselves and that hundreds of dead bodies had filled the sea.

Foreign eyewitnesses, such as the Director of the American School, M. Mils, described the horror of those days and named the Turks as being responsible for the arson. What was even more horrible was that the Turks had formed a human chain in the district of Karatas blocking the Greeks in their escape from their districts which were on fire. The same was also reported by the correspondent of the Post. The drama of the unfortunate human beings, numbering more than 300.000 people, on Smyrna's quay, continued in the following days as well. The US Consul General to Smyrna, George Horton, had written that there had not been a similar tragedy in the history of humanity. Those unfortunate people had to watch their houses set on fire while fleeing to the rescue boats. The drama of those people did not affect the personnel of the anchored allied ships that kept severe neutrality; besides, their sailors had even thrown back into the sea those who were brave enough to swim as far as the boats. The strict and objective judge of facts, Giles Milton, who collected, over the last years, authentic information from Levantines of Smyrna writes in his jolting book<sup>2</sup> that the commanders of the allied ships, annoyed from the crowd's wails, ordered the music of Paliazzo and Humoresque to be played from the hailers.<sup>3</sup>

Nevertheless, humane acts had also taken place from the allied ships, such as in the cases of Charles House and Charles Drage, Commander of HMS Cardiff, who took the initiative and saved thousands of Greeks. Furthermore, the act of the Y.M.C.A. Deputy Director, Asa Jennings, was also brave as he decided, while being in the suburb of Paradeisos, to take charge

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<sup>2</sup> Giles Milton, *Paradise Lost*, Smyrna 1922.

<sup>3</sup> I do consider that both of the books that circulated recently in Greece constitute trustworthy documents regarding the Genocide. Yet, they were not written to substantiate the facts regarding the Greeks of Asia Minor. These books are by Giles Milton, *Paradise Lost*, Smyrna 1922 and by Bruce Clark, *Twice a Stranger*.

of the Hellenic ships that were anchored in Mytilini and bring them to the port of Smyrna in order to save 15.000 refugees in the dawn of September 11<sup>th</sup>, which was a Saturday, and another 43.000 on September 13<sup>th</sup>.<sup>4</sup> Now the question of course is what happened to the rest of the people. The number of the people murdered cannot be established. Yet, refugees numbering 180.000 had been transferred to Greece by September 18<sup>th</sup>. A large number of the quay refugees ranging from 18-45 years old were arrested and sent to the inland of Asia Minor. Unfortunately, there is no evidence regarding the precise number of those who came back or, of course, regarding the thousands of people who were lost forever.

In the meantime, when all this happened in Smyrna, similar tragic events took place in the suburbs of Kordelio, Boutzas, Koukloutzas, Göz Tepe, Bournova where the slaughtering of children was expanded. The Anglican horseman Charles Dobson, who was watching everything over the ship on which he had boarded, wrote that he could watch the villages of Smyrna set on fire and that he could hear the outcry of the slaughtered people while bodies of drowned people were floating around the ship.

Towards the western part, in the ports of Urfa and Cesme, as well as in Ayvali, thousands of refugees were waiting for their rescue ships. The overall number of the refugees of Aiolia who were transferred to Greece after September 18<sup>th</sup> (October 1<sup>st</sup>) amounted to 60.000 and there the misery of their suspense lasted for more than 20 days.<sup>5</sup> They were the lucky ones considering that in Ayvali the Turkish army had intruded on September 6<sup>th</sup> starting the assault and battery reaching its culmination with the slaughter of 4.000 men that took place in the gorge of Musul Dag or in the location Tam Ali. Other inhabitants of Ayvali were executed outside Ayvali and Andramyttium. By September 1<sup>st</sup> 1922, hundreds of inhabitants from the surrounding villages found shelter in Ayvali. In the end, however, they were finally executed after being robbed. The lucky ones were those who were allowed to aboard two Hellenic ships on September 8<sup>th</sup>. Metropolitan Grigorios was not allowed to board and suffered a 9-day torture and then found death along

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<sup>4</sup> It should also be mentioned that the Commander of Smyrna Nurendin had given to the Greeks and Armenians a two-weeks notice to leave Smyrna, meaning till September, 17<sup>th</sup> (September 30<sup>th</sup>, according to the new calendar).

<sup>5</sup> Nurendin had allowed the refugees that had flown into Ayvali, Cesme and Vourla to leave after the expiration of the September, 17<sup>th</sup> notice (old calendar).

with other priests on September 17<sup>th</sup>. The same fortune was to be found for the Bishop of the neighboring Moschonisia, Amvrosios Plianthides, who was buried alive along with his priests on September 14<sup>th</sup>. Those who survived but did not manage to escape, and were between 18-45 years old, were sent as captives to the inland of Asia Minor. Among them was also Elias Venezis, who was 18 years old at the time, who wrote down the martyrdom of his captivity in his shocking book No 31328- The Chronicle of Captivity.

Among the victims of the Ayvali Genocide was also the commander of the city's fire brigade who protected many Greek refugees and, because of that, was accused by his compatriots and was executed.

In the peninsula of Erythraia, 100 km from Smyrna, where there were many homogeneous Greek villages, we do have evidence of everything that happened in Vourla with a population of 35.000. The slaughter took place on September 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup>. The people of Vourla, despite the intense advice of N. Plastyras, who was there on September 2<sup>nd</sup>, refused to desert the city, although they did see the flames coming from Smyrna which had been set on fire. Thus, on the following days, they had to go through all tragic events that they suffered. The same happened in the nearby Cesme where many Greeks managed to escape when they went aboard the Hellenic ships that collected the defeated Hellenic Army from the port of Cesmes. From the villages of Erythraia, villagers chased down by the Tsetes were coming down the coastline in a frantic state of mind and were collected from Hellenic navy ships. At least those who managed to do so.

After August 13<sup>th</sup> 1922, the day when the Turks started their massive assault, especially after August 19<sup>th</sup> when the Hellenic army evacuated Eski Sehir, thousands of refugees had flown into the north-western part of Asia Minor, in Propontis, and in historical cities like Kios, Moudania, Kyzikos and Panormos. On August 28<sup>th</sup> the Hellenic army and Hellenic populations withdrew from Bursa and found shelter in Kios and Moudania. According to the Daily News, approximately 25.000 refugees were gathered in Moudania alone and more than 60.000 in the overall area of the Marmaras coastline. Many of them were rescued thanks to coordinated action on behalf of Colonel Ziras and the Director of the American Girls' School, Miss Jilson. Nevertheless, there were less fortunate people who were slaughtered or captured in the port of Moudania along with the 11<sup>th</sup> Hellenic Division; the French officers were massively liable for this course of events, considering that they literally handed them over to Kemal's officers. A bit further to the south, in Balik

Kesser, on September 4<sup>th</sup>, 4.000 Greeks were slaughtered in the square. The same happened in Sindirge where 3.000 were slaughtered, in Ak Cai, in the bay of Andramyttium and Balia where approximately 1.000 Greeks were slaughtered on the spot.<sup>6</sup> According to the sources in the district of Balik Kесе, based on rough estimations, 17.000 Greeks were murdered and, overall, approximately 30.000 people were murdered in the whole north-western part of Asia Minor; another 18.900 have to be added to this number, corresponding to people who were murdered before the evacuation of these areas. Thus, there were 40.000 victims in total.

The inhabitants of Menemeni, Fokaia, Philadelpheia, Salichli and, in general, of all the districts around Smyrna, who managed to escape before the intrusion of the Turkish army, were rescued. The others were slaughtered or captured or just waited for the rescue ships in the port of Smyrna.

Only from Smyrna and the surrounding area, the number of the captives that were driven to the inland of Asia Minor came up to 150.000. Out of them, 3.000 lost their lives in the beginning of their journey outside Smyrna in the suburb of Bounarbasi and another 5.000 outside the suburb of Burnova. A large slaughter of approximately 5.000 took place outside Magnesia. In general, the military camps were located in Kiutacheia, Usak, Eski Sehir, Ankara, Afion Kara Chisar, Kaisareia, Nigdi etc. In Usak the Turks had gathered young people from Asia Minor who had been enlisted in the Hellenic army. Out of the 8.000 Greeks, only half of them survived and among them my father who was 18 years old at the time. Of course, all of the captives, except the Turkish soldiers and citizens, had to deal with the torment of thirst, hunger, typhus and enteritis. Out of the 150.000 captives only 15.000 returned to Greece; this information is given by C. A. McCartney.

In conclusion, according to the trustworthy information given by N. Pentzopoulos, during the days of fire, 12.000 people died. An overall number of the genocide victims of Asia Minor is estimated to come up to 1.000.000 (Kapsis), 400.000 (Misaelides), 300.000 (Sp. Markezinis). The number of the people who had arrived from the ports of Smyrna, Ayvali, Moudania, Dekeli came up to 500.000. To the overall number of the victims of Asia Minor another 300.000 should be added corresponding to people who lost their lives in Amele Tambourou and during their exile in the World War I, according

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<sup>6</sup> In Axari, 7.000 out of 10.000 Greeks were slaughtered in the gorge of Kirtik Dere.

to trustworthy researchers such as Mich. Theotokas, legal counselor of Greece at the Conference of Lausanne. Assuming that the overall number of the refugees who arrived in Greece came up to 1.500.000 and that the overall number of the Greeks of Asia Minor came up to 2.000.000, this means that the victims of the Genocide came up to 500.000.

Therefore, we, the people from Asia Minor of third generation, asking the States of Greece and Turkey to recognize the fact that the Genocide of the Greeks in Asia Minor actually took place, something that would lead to the enhancement of the relations between the two countries. Thus, thousands of souls of the people of Asia Minor who lie under Ionian ground will find their peace.

Before I conclude the present essay, I would suggest the translation in English and French languages of some of the extracts of renowned books regarding the Genocide of the Greeks in Asia Minor such as those by Dim. Fotiadis, Elias Venezis, Dido Sotiriou, Kosmas Politis, Chr. Solomonides, Pasch. Travlos, Pantelis and Giannis Kapsis, and mainly the testimonies of the exodus by the Centre of Studies on Asia Minor. These books should be translated and addressed by competent parties to politicians, diplomatic and other bodies of the International Community.

## Η ΓΕΝΟΚΤΟΝΙΑ ΤΩΝ ΕΛΛΗΝΩΝ ΤΗΣ ΜΙΚΡΑΣ ΑΣΙΑΣ

### ΠΕΡΙΛΗΨΗ

Πρόθεση της παρούσας μελέτης είναι να απεικονίσει συνοπτικά το σύνολο των περιστατικών που έλαβαν χώρα κατά τη διάρκεια του Σεπτεμβρίου του 1922 στη Μικρά Ασία, περιστατικά που, αναμφίβολα, αποτελούν μια πρωτοφανή για την ανθρωπότητα γενοκτονία. Έλληνες και ξένοι παρατηρητές και αυτόπτες μάρτυρες των γεγονότων περιγράφουν όλα όσα συνέβησαν κατά τη διάρκεια ενός μόνο μήνα, στα δυτικά παράλια της Μικράς Ασίας, από τους Τούρκους σε βάρος του ελληνικού ορθόδοξου πληθυσμού. Η χρονική αυτή περίοδος, αρχής γενομένης από τις 27 Αυγούστου έως 30 του Σεπτεμβρίου του 1922, είναι η πιο τραγική στην ιστορία του Μικρασιατικού Ελληνισμού και δυστυχώς, δεν υπάρχει κανένα αποδεικτικό στοιχείο σχετικά με τον ακριβή αριθμό των ατόμων που σώθηκαν ούτε βέβαια εντοπίζονται στοιχεία όσον αφορά στις χιλιάδες των ανθρώπων που χάθηκαν για πάντα στη δυτική και βορειοδυτική Μικρά Ασία. Μόνο οι κάτοικοι της Μενεμένης, Φώκαιας, Φιλαδέλφειας και Σαλιχλί κατάφεραν να διαφύγουν, πριν από την εισβολή του τουρκικού στρατού και έτσι διασώθηκαν. Οι άλλοι σφαγιαστήκαν ή αιχμαλωτίστηκαν. Μόνο από τη Σμύρνη και τη γύρω περιοχή, ο αριθμός των αιχμαλώτων που οδηγήθηκαν στην ενδοχώρα της Μικράς Ασίας ανήλθε σε 150.000. Υποθέτοντας ότι ο συνολικός αριθμός των προσφύγων που έφτασαν στην Ελλάδα έφθανε το 1.500.000 και ότι ο συνολικός αριθμός των Ελλήνων της Μικράς Ασίας ανερχόταν στα 2.000.000, τα θύματα της γενοκτονίας υπολογίζονται σε 500.000.