

**Varoujean Poghosyan, *Le Désastre de Smyrne de 1922 (Recueil de Documents)*, documents réunis et présentés par Varoujean Poghosyan, Erevan, Éditions de l'Université d'État d'Erevan, 2011, 140 p.**

*«The victims of the massacre - Greeks and Armenians - were estimated at 150,000. What was left of Smyrna was only its Turkish suburb. This very old and extremely beautiful Greek city had been founded in 3000 B.C. and restored by Alexander the Great. It used to be one of the most important economic centers of the Mediterranean. It used to be full of life and activity. It used to be prosperous. And now from one moment to the next it was turned into a dead city. To a huge pile of ruins which emitted smoke. Those of its inhabitants who escaped the massacre fled, ousted and miserable, to Greece».*

George Horton, US Consul at Smyrna

Genocide is a crime against humanity which should be universally condemned, and the time that passes, no matter how long it may be, should not at all reduce the magnitude of the crime and the responsibility of those who committed it. The 20<sup>th</sup> century was without a doubt a time when the crime of Genocide appeared and reappeared with great frequency. The Armenian, Greek and Assyrian Genocide, the Holocaust, were significant actions by illiberal governments that violated human rights, taking millions of lives and attempting to eliminate the history and civilization of thousands of years. Since World War II, Genocide has been considered a criminal form of behaviour that is punishable according to international law. It is illegal and should lead to the criminal indictment of any individual that perpetrates the crime.

The Armenian and Greek Genocide, the first genocide of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, is one of the great crimes against humanity that remain unpunished, since a large part of a nation that lived in the Ottoman Empire was murdered. The Smyrna Catastrophe in 1922 was the symbolic end of the Greek and Armenian Genocide.

With the creation of the movement of the Young Turks in the Ottoman empire nationalist ideology appeared and when the Young Turks took over power in 1908, the desire to eliminate all Christian populations was expressed, a desire that was realised during World War I.

When the Armenian Genocide was completed, the procedure to eliminate the Greeks began in the same way: massacres, mass violence, arrests of women and children, violent islamization, death marches. These facts are confirmed by survivors of the Genocide and also by foreign witnesses. With mass murders, persecution and displacements in addition to the burning down of many villages and towns and the destruction of cultural and religious places, many left the area and fled to Russia. No reason or propaganda can explain the crimes that were committed and that are

confirmed by the testimonies of many foreigners, even allies of Mustafa Kemal's movement.

The symbolic end of the Greek Genocide was the Smyrna Catastrophe. Varoujean Poghosyan's book is a great contribution to our knowledge of the Greek and Armenian Genocide and especially of Smyrna's Catastrophe, not only for Greeks and Armenians but and for all humanity. Every human has the right to memory, has the right to persistently demand official recognition of the crimes and injustices committed against him. The bigger the injustice, and the longer the facts are kept secret, the more intense is the will for such recognition. Recognition is an essential way to fight against the plague of genocide; recognition is a confirmation of a people's right to respect for its existence according to international law.

The Greek and Armenian Genocide, including the Smyrna Catastrophe, is an issue with multiple dimensions. Current circumstances in Europe and the whole world make its recognition important for democracy, human rights, freedom, dignity, and true friendship and collaboration, as well as a victory in the fight for the historical truth.

Poghosyan's book is a contribution to the effort of bringing out this issue, the Greek and Armenian Genocide and Smyrna's Catastrophe, an issue that has been put aside for reasons and interests other than historical truth and justice. Nevertheless, a new international order cannot be based on silence, on coyness, on hypocrisy and on the concealment of a crime; it should be based on the search for historical truth. This book concerning the Greek and Armenian Genocide and Smyrna's Catastrophe, will, if possible reveal the historical truth as a priority of personal and collective existence and will, thus, have achieved its purpose.

THEOFANIS MALKIDIS  
malkidis@gmail.com