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THE BURNING DOWN OF IZMIR AND ANOTHER DILEMMA WITH THE ARMENIAN ALLEGATIONS

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It is reported in the Armenian news agencies that a retired Armenian American professor living in the US, one of the leading sources on the Armenian allegations, is planning to go on a road show on the 90th anniversary of the burning down of Izmir in September 1922 in commemoration of the Armenians having had to abandon the city. It is announced that he is to expound on his theory that the Turks had intentionally started the fire and the target were the Greek and Armenian population fleeing the city.

For the intellectual mind with information on Izmirs Armenian population and the burning down of Izmir in 1922, it is inevitable to seek answers to and to conjure up the following: The allegation that militant nationalist Armenian circles and the retired professor insistently and provocatively spread is that in 1915 during the First World War, not only the Armenians in the war zone, but all Armenians have been forced to relocate in order to bring an end to their existence. On the other hand, it is also a recorded fact that a large number of Armenians living in Izmir, which was occupied by Greek soldiers in May 1919 and rescued from occupation in September 1922, have abandoned the city together with the Greeks. In this situation, either the forced relocation was not a racist implementation targeting the entire Armenian population or no significant Armenian population existed in Izmir. It will be interesting to watch how the retired professor, who is talented with numbers game, will overcome this dilemma.

There is another aspect to the issue. In 1076, Izmir was included in the Turkish territories during the period of the Seljuk Turks. In 1389, it was within the borders of the Ottoman Empire. When the Ottoman Empire was defeated during the First World War, Greece embarked on an occupying adventure in Anatolia, The Greek forces landing in Izmir on May 1919 were driven back after advancing towards Ankara and the Turkish troops, taking over Izmir, ended the occupation on 9 September 1922. The Turkish army entering Izmir thus was not taking over a new city or territory, but was recovering its centurys old homeland, apple of her eye, the pearl of the Aegean. Another point to add, it is not an allegation but a documented historical fact that while retreating from central and Western Anatolia, the Greek army is on record to have set fire to settlements and cultivated areas, leaving behind only destruction and scorched earth.

In this situation, a minimum sense of equity necessitates asking the question of why the Turks would burn down their own city. Which is more likely, that those who had no other

choice but to abandon the city after the atrocities they committed against the local community for three years and was left with no hope to return or the Turks who for the coming decades faced the enormous task of restoring the city which was ruined, at a period when the new Republic was struggling with economic hardships, burden down the city. What do you think?

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