



Paradise Lost: Smyrna, 1922

Giles Milton

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On Saturday, September 9, 1922, the victorious Turkish cavalry rode into Smyrna, the richest and most cosmopolitan city in the Ottoman Empire. The city's vast wealth created centuries earlier by powerful Levantine dynasties, its factories teemed with Greeks, Armenians, Turks, and Jews. Together, they had created a majority Christian city that was unique in the Islamic world. But to the Turkish nationalists, Smyrna was a city of infidels. In the aftermath of the First World War and with the support of the Great Powers, Greece had invaded Turkey with the aim of restoring a Christian empire in Asia. But by the summer of 1922, the Greeks had been vanquished by Atatürk's armies after three years of warfare. As Greek troops retreated, the non-Muslim civilians of Smyrna assumed that American and European warships would intervene if and when the Turkish cavalry decided to enter the city. But this was not to be. On September 13, 1922, Turkish troops descended on Smyrna. They rampaged first through the Armenian quarter, and then throughout the rest of the city. They looted homes, raped women, and murdered untold thousands. Turkish soldiers were seen dousing buildings with petroleum. Soon, all but the Turkish quarter of the city was in flames and hundreds of thousands of refugees crowded the waterfront, desperate to escape. The city burned for four days; by the time the embers cooled, more than 100,000 people had been killed and millions left homeless. Based on eyewitness accounts and the memories of survivors, many interviewed for the first time, *Paradise Lost* offers a vivid narrative account of one of the most vicious military catastrophes of the modern age.

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