

## **Armenians at the Quay of Smyrna – George Poulimenos**

Although the Armenians in 1922 represented only 5% of the total population of Izmir (about 15,000 out of a total of 300,000), there was among them a large number of wealthy merchants. Recognizing the value of the new quay completed in 1875, wealthy Armenians invested in it early on, buying plots of land and building houses and buildings for commercial use.

In 1889, out of the 102 houses in the residential part of the quay of Smyrna, 15 belonged to Armenians, and their number increased to 16 by 1914. Respectively, for all the buildings of the quay, 30 out of 204 plots belonged to Armenians in 1889, to decrease imperceptibly to 27 by 1914. That is, the percentage of Armenian properties on the waterfront was about 15%, well above their share of the population of Smyrna.

In fact, some of the largest and most beautiful buildings on the quay belonged to Armenians, such as the two Spartali mansions, the Baliosian residential complex, the former Arapian stock exchange (later a hotel), the impressive Oriental Carpet headquarters, the huge Baliozian & Essayan warehouse, the Maxoudian inn etc.

The participation of the Armenians in the economic activities that took place in the port was also great, as evidenced by the 6 Armenian presidents of the Smyrna Chamber of Commerce, in a total of 12 presidents between 1885-1922.

The Armenian presence in Smyrna ended in September 1922 after the destruction of the city by the great fire that started in the Armenian quarter and the subsequent exodus of the Christian population.