

THE EFFECTS OF THESSALONIKI FIRE OF 18 AUGUST 1917 ON OTTOMAN URBAN TEXTURE AND ARCHITECTURE ON ITS 100th ANNIVERSARY

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This study includes the reconstruction of Thessaloniki's historical center within the conjuncture of the 1910s-1920s and the pre&post great fire of 1917 that destroyed Thessaloniki.

Thessaloniki is the second biggest city of Greece with its 1.1 Million population. The city which has the second largest port of the country is also the capital city of The Central Thessaloniki Region. Thessaloniki, where historical and modern buildings are together, hosts four leading universities besides the second biggest exhibition center of the country and has been considered as the window of the Balkans to the world throughout history was, the city is accepted as the industrial, commercial and cultural center of the Northern Greece.

At the beginning of the 20th century, a voyager landing on Thessaloniki was fascinated much more than anything by the modern stylish buildings of the port and the city besides the minarets and delicate domes. However, Thessaloniki which looked magnificent at that time was actually not that impressive at all. 1000 years old city survived the darkest period of its history at the beginning of 19th century. War, an environment of insecurity, epidemics, fires, economic collapse... All these disasters accumulated degrading the exclusive city into an ordinary town. The city rejuvenated once again due to the Tanzimat Reforms¹ initiated by the Ottoman Empire in 1839. Hatt-ı Hümayun** which expressed once again the claim of Ottoman government to carry the reforms onward was declared to the city on 17 February 1856. Hatt-ı Hümayun² which expressed once again the claim of Ottoman government to carry the reforms onward was declared to the city on 17 February 1856.

The first initiatives for putting the city in order were realized in July 1859 when Sultan Abdülmecid went on a long trip to provinces in order to consolidate the implementation of the reforms. The main road leading the Government Office to the pier was extended by demolishing the balconies of some stores and bay windows of several houses. The surrounding streets were paved. The Sultan's visit was an extraordinary situation for the city. The Sultan the 1970s in an atmosphere of welfare. While Sultan Abdülmecid stayed at the house of Yusuf Pasha who was an esquire and the biggest landowner of the region, many people in his entourage were hosted by notable Jews like Dario Allatini and Salomon

¹ Tanzimat, (Turkish: "Reorganization"), series of reforms promulgated in the Ottoman Empire between 1839 and 1876 under the reigns of the sultans Abdülmecid I and Abdülaziz. These reforms, heavily influenced by European ideas, were intended to effectuate a fundamental change of the empire from the old system based on theocratic principles to that of a modern state.

² Royal decree of Ottoman Sultan

Fernandez. A pavilion was erected at Beşçınar Garden where the Sultan received the city dwellers whole day. Impressive stories narrated about this temporary pavilion could not conceal the fact that the city did not own a public building which was worthy of hosting the Sultan. Until 1879, an effective renovation had not been recognized in the city.

In 1879, Governor Sabri Pasha obtained authorization from the Ottoman government to demolish the fortification walls facing the sea and build a discharging quay on this area. The city went beyond its ancient frame for the first time and the eastern fortification walls were demolished. The owners of the piece of lands which had been used for agriculture until then demanded areas suitable for housing in order to initiate construction in compliance with the Province Act of 1864. The officials supported this initiative and a wide boulevard (Hamidiye Boulevard) which extended vertically towards the quay along the demolished fortification wall was opened. On the land where the remnants of the fortification walls belonging to the Sultan stood, terraced houses were built. These houses were called 'Sultani' or 'Hamidiye'. Those houses with electrical installation were rented to consulates or prosperous people of Thessaloniki. On the other side of the boulevard, the first neighborhood of the outer fortification walls appeared with an amazing progress. "Hamidiye Fountain" which bore the name of the Sultan was built as the starting point of the city. A great opening ceremony was organized. At the ceremony, it was recognized that a half oriental-half European, heterogenous and multicultural transition society had emerged. During the ceremony, the orchestra first played the Hamidiye Anthem and then dance music. The fountain 17th-century with cherry juice service after praying³.

Thessaloniki was connected to Paris and metropolitan cities of the west via Belgrade-Mitrovica after the completion of the railway construction in 1888. In the same year, the municipality published the first plan of the city⁴. Yet, a great fire broke out in 1890. The consequences were disastrous. At the fire which broke out on 15th of August when Saint Mary died, 3,500 houses and stores, 7 major and 25 minor synagogues, an Orthodox cathedral, all charitable institutions of the Greek and the Old Hagia Sophia Church which had been converted into mosque burned to ashes. The fire of 1890 identifies the last phase of the modernization of Thessaloniki. The area affected by the fire was rearranged in accordance with a new municipal plan offering wide and straight streets, parcels with upright borders, square-shaped open spaces. Well-planned, spacious, uniform buildings were built instead of confined neighborhoods of centuries old. The traditional Ottoman urban texture changed and the society which had lived according to ethnic and religious similarities until then was segregated in accordance with level of income.

³ Yerolympos, Alexandra, Colonas, Vassilis, "Kozmopolit Bir Kentleşme", **Selanik, 1850-1928**, Edited by: Gilles Veinstein, İletişim Yay., İstanbul, 2014, p.200.

⁴ Anastasiadou, Meropi, **Tanzimat Çağında Bir Osmanlı Şehri Selanik (1830-1912)**, (Özgün Adı: Salonique, 1830-1912 Une ville Ottomane a l'âge des Réformes), İstanbul, Kasım 2011.

In 1899, the city development plan was carried into effect. In 1890 Thessaloniki was gaslit; in 1893 the city had water supply network; in 1907 electric tramways were operated; minor squares and parks appeared in the old downtown. On 9 November 1912, Governor Tahsin Pasha surrendered the city to the Greek without any battle and the urbanization activities in Thessaloniki came to an end. Then the first great migration wave of Turks to Anatolia began. The fire of 1917 contributed to the change in the physical structure of the city.

There are two important first hand written sources about Thessaloniki fire that broke out on 18 August 1917 which describe the incident comprehensively. One of these sources is the memories⁵ of the journalist Henry Collinson who served for the British army, and the other is the novel called "Selanik Alev Alev" written by Mr. Ali Dilber who listened stories about the fire experienced by his mother throughout all his childhood and life⁶. Although the author of the novel had not been to Thessaloniki, he illustrated the residences and the locations of the buildings flawlessly to his reader in his novel as if he had actually suffered the fire. The author's long life in İstanbul with his mother who suffered the fire at the age of 17, his family and neighbours had undoubtedly great effect on the detailed descriptions of the author in his novel. Mr. Dilber expressed in our one on one interview that his family (bearded grandfather and grandmother) and neighbours who had immigrated to İstanbul after the fire was deliriously telling stories about Thessaloniki and the fire. In his narration, the fire breaks out at the Jewish neighbourhood.

"The afternoon azan had just been recited. There appeared flames at the backside of the Jewish Neighbourhood when it began getting dark.. At first everybody thought that a big house was in flames. Beforelong the fire-God knows what kind of a fire it was- burst into flames as if gas was spilt on it, and the flames rose higher and higher. At the same time yellow and red sparkles (like in firework show) covered the sky. Our tranquil hearts got excited. We looked at the Jewish Neighbourhood in curiosity one again. The number of those who believed that it was a great fire was increasing. Some of them, if they did not have something to do in urgent, went up to a place where they could better watch the fire leaving behind what they were doing then. People were piling up at parts of houses or gardens from where they could watch the fire better. All at once thought the same thing. It was not a single house or a message that was burning. That was clear. The fire also began to spread to the other houses as the flames were piling up and rising to this high (s.37)."

"We could not identify whose house first burst into flames, who their neighbours were, we could not name them. Since we were not acquainted with those who were living at that neighbourhood and did not walk on its streets often, we could not identify the owners

of these burning houses there as good as we identified the ones we knew. For instance, although they were not close to us, we knew the houses at Cezeri Kasım or Subaşı Neighbourhood and Yalı Villas by their names; however it was different for the Jewish Neighbourhood. As the flames spreaded thoroughly, we could not determine whose house was in flames because of incomplete information. Now it was obvious that more than one house was burning. As far as we could see, the center of the fire was growing stronger and spreading step by step. There was nobody left now who assumed that the fire would be extinguished soon (s.38)”.

At the Jewish Neighbourhood, maybe three or more house, that is a street was in flames. The words of my Aunt Gülbeyaz proved this reality. According to her, there was not any stone house which could resist fire. Many of the buildings were wooden and also many of them crooked and forlorn. Wooden houses would burn completely unless houses next to burning ones were drenched! After listening all these, we could illustrate in our minds without seeing with our own eyes that a whole street was totally burning there.

This abundance of light at the neighbourhood in flames were seen by us even a little. The reign of lightlessness to which we had been doomed since the fall of Thessaloniki because of power cuts- ‘pitch black’ as old people called it- seemed like weakening that night! There was no need for the poor efforts of lanterns that we used on our way. In spite of being far away, the flames were lightening up way of people wandering there like moonlight... However, the place which was ablazing indeed was the Jewish neighbourhood and the slopes reaching out the hill called Tumba just over the neighbourhood.

It had been hours since we first saw the flames, however everybody was at gardens. Since it was not cold yet, nobody was thinking of entering home. Children who were not allowed to go outside and old people-although they were in pyjamas- went to houses with balconies to catch a better view of far away. Elders were sitting on chairs while kids found somewhere to sit.

There was silence in spite of the crowded outside. I am sure, all these silent people were empathising with those people whose houses were burning there.

A breeze blowing from the Balkans began to push the flames towards seaside. With that blowing their riot of colours disappeared by a black smoke. The deceptive beauty we had watched until then covered by a smoke screen. Sparkling disappeared. The horrible sight of the disaster began to appear. The smoke was spreading everywhere in the city-even the areas unaffected by the fire. The silence came to an end slowly. Everbody began to talk. According

to the estimations, the smoke was now over the meadowland and Koca Çarşı. As the reality united with this estimation, whispers began to be spoken out loudly. The ongoing silence also came to an end. The wind which was blowing stronger now began to carry screams and cries to our neighbourhood. With the first flames, the city had looked shining and sparkling, however this smoke changed everything. It was turning everything into its own colour, darkening the city by covering the eye-catching glow with its more and more thickening veil! It was also concealing the growing disaster underneath. A part of Thessaloniki was burning out (p. 40-42)”

On the other hand, in his memories, British journalist Henry Collins Owens expresses that the fire broke out on 18 August 1917 Saturday in the afternoon at the Turkish Neighbourhood, at the kitchen of a house between Mevlevihane and uptown. Because of lack of water and indifference of neighbours to the fire, the fire covered nearby houses and began to threaten a very large area in a short time with the help of strong winds:

“Since fire was quite common in Thessaloniki, Owen was not terrified but went up to the roof in curiosity where he could see the whole city. When he looked through his binoculars, he saw that the fire had covered a considerable piece of land in the north-west corner of Upper City, on the hill above the port and approached towards him flared up by the wind.

Gradually, smoke pillars above the city intensified so much so that when it got dark, the streets and narrow passages stretching out down the hill were crawling with the survivors escaping from the fire. They were coming down to open spaces at the seaside through the Egnatia Road. Soldiers who were trying to climb up their way through the crowd came across with the Muslims in their fez, slippers and long gabardine clothes, the old Jews and women crying for help who grabbed their children’s hands”⁵.

At night the flames reached the down city and the buildings were neighborhoods with a futile effort of preventing the spread of fire. Towards midnight, the buildings facing the sea were covered with fire and within minutes three-quarters of the one and a half kilometers long coastline became a remarkable cliff of orange and white flames⁶. Cushions, mattresses, quilts, pillows and clothes that were desperately saved by the fire victims were piled up around White Tower. There were brass bedsteads, headboards and carpets beside them.

⁵ Mazower, Mark, Selanik: **Hayaletler Şehri, Hıristiyanlar, Müslümanlar ve Yahudiler (1430-1950)**, Çev. Gül Çağalı Güven, Yapı Kredi Yay., İstanbul, 2007, s.327; Preece, R., “Great Fire Impressions”, **The Mosquito**, S.119, Eylül 1957. Ayrıca bkz.:Pierce, Harry, (Mawson, T., **Life and Works of and English Landscape Architect**, London, 1927, s.281-282; Luck, S., **Jewish Chronicle**, 5 Ekim 1917.

⁶ Mazower, **a.g.e.**, s.329.

The flames reached the Government Office which had been built during the Ottoman era. The building was saved thanks to helping people. However, Selim Paşa Mosque, Selim Paşa High School, Police Academy and Watch Tower were ruined by flames. At the backyard of the mosque, the tombs belonging to the house of Evrenos also damaged by the fire. As the wind got stronger, the fire reached at the downtown. The fire which had continued all night long covered all shopping centers at dawn, that is on Sunday, on 19 August and it reached at Hagia Sophia Neighbourhood before noon.

The allied forces tried to take measures in order to provide security of the camps at the outskirts of the city. The dynamites at an armory that belonged to the French next to the Government Office began to explode. On the following morning, the English fire pump fought the fire nearby the White Tower. The customs office was saved by the French soldiers. Then the fire began to cease slowly. The buildings were still burning when the soldiers came back to the city two days later for damage assessment⁷.

More than three-quarter of the city, 32 % of Thessaloniki burned up. After the fire, a new construction plan was put into effect on 120-hectare area. The total damage of the fire was estimated at 500 Million Franc.

As it can be seen on the map, especially the area between Vardar Street and the dock totally burned up. The Jewish banks, big stores, hotels, night clubs of the city were all in this area⁸. Hotel Splendid, Hotel Olympes, Cinema Pate, Postal Office, Water and Gas Company Building, Ottoman Bank, National Bank, Athens Bank and all other banks being the first place, 4.096 stores, all commercial buildings, all hotels and cinemas burned down. Most of the churches survived except three Orthodox churches. However, Saint Dimitrios Church of Byzantine Empire was totally burned up leaving behind only its naked walls. The factors like strong winds, lack of water, narrow streets hindering movement of fire brigaders contributed to the magnitude of the damage. 9.500 buildings were devastated, more than 70.000 people were left homeless. Since the most damage of the fire was at the historical neighborhoods of the Jews, the Jewish society was the most affected group: thirty seven synagogues, libraries, schools, club buildings and most of the workplaces were destroyed.⁹ Selim Pasha Mosque and cemetery, ten mosques, hundreds of houses, Police Academy, Clock Tower, İsmail Pasha Inn, Old Tomruk and Pasha Oriental which were among the Ottoman architectural masterpieces totally burned down and many historical buildings were damaged.

After the fire, the allied military forces helped the Greek officials to provide shelter to the homeless. Most of them were placed in tents, cottages and barracks in the vicinity of the city. Those who had relatives living in other places were encouraged to leave the city. Five thousand Greek moved to Athens, Volos and Larissa; most of the poor Jews immigrated to France, Italy, Spain and USA¹⁰. Some of the Turks who were former owners of the city tried to go to Istanbul by ships that they could find. However there was big obstacle before them: It

⁷ Mazower, **a.g.e.**, s.329.

⁸ **Tevhid-i Efkâr**, 31 August 1917, Issue: 2208.

⁹ Mazower, **a.g.e.**, s.329.

¹⁰ Smart, F.H., "The Great Fire", **The Mosquito**, 93, March 1951.

was hard to find a ship and a captain who could sail through the Dardanelles which was mined by the British army.

When Thessaloniki joined Greece in 1912, although the city was gradually becoming westernized, it still had the characteristic of pre-industrial period and an Ottoman city in architectural terms. According to the official population census of 1913, its population was 157.889(with 32184 families). 61.439 were Jews, 45.867 were Turks, 39.956 were Greeks, 6.236 were Bulgarians and 4364 were foreigners¹¹. However, in this data, immigration of a great number of Turks from the city in 1912 should be taken into account. According to the population census conducted 4 years before the fire, 72.000 people's finding themselves homeless after the fire proved that more than half of the city was affected by the fire.

Public soup-kitchens were established in the city and food was provided to 30.000 people. In September, the number of the tent residents reduced to 7.500. Two months after the fire, an English soldier wrote: "Thessaloniki is a city of deads."¹¹

In Balkans, using wood as the basic material of construction in Ottoman residence architecture is a tradition of centuries long. Thessaloniki, Monastiri, Veria, Skopje and Plovdiv being the first place, woodwork is quite common in all traditional residence texture. The rise of urban population in 19th Century proves that the consequences of fires became much more devastating. Traveler Ami Boue wrote in 1854: "The French Consulate told us that he had to protect his most valuable document in fear of fire before going to holiday."¹² After three great fires and forty years, an American scholar who visited the city to develop his collection of books on Jewish culture received this answer: "We had books but all burned up."¹³

Before 1917 in Thessaloniki, the biggest and last fire of 19th Century broke out in 1890. The fire remarkably damaged the city center especially the Christian neighborhood nearby Hippodrome. However, this fire was a pale comparison to the fire of 1917 which destroyed the essence of the Ottoman city and the Jewish core¹⁴.

After the fire, being aware of its role in construction sector, Greece Government took on a successful task by promoting rise of land prices and enforcing construction regulations that were far above the current norms(especially reinforced concrete obligation). At the same time, reconstruction enabled to formulate an official discourse which expressed the importance of government intervention in reorganization of residences.

¹¹ Mazower, **a.g.e.**, s.329.

¹² Boué, A., **Receuil d'Itinéraires dans la Turquie d'Europe**, Viyana, 1854, s.154.

¹³ Adler, V., **Jews in Many Lands**, Philadelphia, 1905, s.147.

¹⁴ Mazower, **a.g.e.**, s.330.

Pre-Fire Architecture After 1912

Following the great fire of 1917 which ruined the city, in the conjuncture of 1910-1920s, reorganization of the city's historical center draws attention as the basic point of its historical development.

After Thessaloniki entered into the domination of Greece in 1912, as a result of the new political conjuncture and the uncertainty that appeared because of the changes at the city's hinterland, there was limited new building construction in both historical and developing areas of the city. Some public buildings like Custom Office and Cathedral, new factories at the west side of the city in addition to a number of private houses on Des Champagnes Avenue were among the constructions of the period. During the World War I, playing a major role in the construction of some infrastructural projects like wheat silos and ice house, the Allied forces contributed a lot to the enhancement of economical, commercial and recreational life in the city.

On the week following the fire, in addition to the efforts made for re-establishing supply and communication in the city and temporarily tending to fire victims, the Greek Government declared its decision of expropriating fire affected areas belonging to 4101 land owners three forth of whom were Jews¹⁵.

After setting out principles, three commissions were established: the first commission prepared topographical and cadastral surveys. The second commission presided by architect Ernest Bebrard gathered under the name of "Thessaloniki Plan International Commission. This commission studied on the city plan and growth areas dedicated to 350.000 people from the first day on.

The third commission held meetings with distinguished lawyers under the presidency of the Minister of Transportation Alexandre Papanastasiyu. They studied on preparing a legislation that aimed easily implementation of the plan.

During the last four years, the Prime-Minister Venizelos had suffered the lack of hygiene and aesthetic which were much needed in Thessaloniki. The fire of 1917 emerged 'almost like a divine favor'. Venizelos told the president of the committee, the exclusive landscape architect English Thomas Mawson, to see the city as a clear canvas¹⁵. Because of the fire of 1917, Ottoman urban texture and architectural works of Thessaloniki were considerably wiped out. For that reason, the Turkish people could not legally put a claim for their lands during the implementation of the project.

Architect Thomas Mawson was a garden architect who was famous for his colonial mansions located between Hampstead and Vancouver. He had also mentored Greek officials

¹⁵ **The Orient Weekly**, 2 Eylül 1917; Karadimou-Gerolymou, A., **I anoikodomisi tis Thessalonikis meta tin pyrkaia tou 1917**, Thessaloniki, 1985, p.35.

about urban development in Athens before the war. Just three months after the first meeting of the planning committee, a preparatory work was displayed to public and Mawson who had got very exhausted during the studies was sent to England. Young Ernest Hebrand took his position. He performed archeological excavations at Byzantine and Roman settlements in the city in the name of the Archeology Office of the army. Hebrand was also an architect. He had designed cities in French Indochina¹⁶.

After the fire, a committee of 7 persons presided by the French Architect E. Hebrand was appointed to the designation of the new city plan. The new plan imposed the obligation of complying with the specified facade types for the buildings that would be built at the main crossroads and the city squares. The main characteristic of these facade type was to have eclectic features explicitly influenced by the French colonial architecture.

The plan of the commission was a synthesis of the dominant understanding of the period and the features of the period. The cosmopolitan city disappeared as it gradually modernized and europeanized, and a “modern” city emerged in its stead.

Hebrand’s plan included ideas that suggested expansion of the city towards suburbs, replacing disorganized neighbourhoods with uniform architectural style and adhering to Roman and Byzantine style buildings. In order to give some identity to the new plan and provide free public spaces to the city, Hebrand utilized especially Byzantine churches. He also created an archeological parade that extended to the ruins of Byzantine Palace and Victory Monument from Roman Rotondo.

The reconstruction commission of the city also applied modern methods like reinforced concrete during building construction, designed modern block plans and prepared organized and one-piece parcels of lands.

The architecture of “re-construction” period of postwar years was not radically different from the previous period. Facades of the multi-storey buildings were constructed as “groundwork”, “carcass” and “upper part” in accordance with the criteria of private residential buildings. Usage of reinforced concrete enabled speed needed for constructing many buildings at the same time. However, the architects had difficulty in transferring their own morphological languages to new structures¹⁷.

Well-tried French residence type began to influence the architecture of the first great buildings constructed at fire-affected areas. The eclecticism which had affected the preferences of architects and building owners in the previos period, became the main stream any kind of morphological rules. Also, thanks to the influence of highly stylized and adapted-to-Greek-style Art Nouveau elements, there could be seen a slight revitalization.

¹⁶ Bu konu hakkında en ayrıntılı kitap için bkz.: **The Life and Work of a Northern Landscape Architect: Thomas Mawson**, Lanchester, 1978; Mazower, a.g.e., s.334.

¹⁷ Colonas, Vassilis, “Selanik 1912-1922” (Çev.:Arif Şentek), **Ege Mimarlık**, 25, p.39.

In 1918, “New Thessaloniki Plan Implementation Act” was unanimously accepted by the parliament. This legislation was setting forth transfer of public lands to a group of real estate which united all properties at the fire affected area. After rating the former shares, each property owner bought a sale bill equal to its rate which could not be transferred. This implementation aimed preventing collection of sale bills by an individual and speculations. In accordance with the new plan, the shares would be auctioned off and sold to buyers by auction. However, this plan had a political aspect since 75% of the properties belonged to the Jewish dwellers of Thessaloniki.

The law of expropriating the fire-affected area in the city was considered as an attempt to repel the Jews. The attempt caused great reactions in the Jewish Community of Thessaloniki and the community asked for support from the international Jewish authorities. In spite of foreign pressure, the government did not come to an agreement. While Venizelos was passing his remarks at the parliament, he stated that he had persuaded the heads of French and English delegations to the actual objectives of reconstructing the city.

To be honest, it was hard to understand that a small country which was desperately in need of international support and on the verge of waging war on Turkey took the risk of attracting enmity of a major part of the international society¹⁸.

Hetty Goldman wrote in his letter to American Jew Distribution Committee: “As Mawson clearly states, the basic goal of the plan is to deprive the Jews of the city’s supervision”. He went on: “However, Mawson also expresses that they don’t want a career.” On the contrary, the Greek officials wanted to keep the Jews and they believed that there were such Jewish people who could have afford to buy again bigger construction areas. It was clear that the owners of minor lands were the ones who would make a loss from this situation¹⁸.

According to the reports of Greece National Bank for 1919-1920, the Greeks who were not from Thessaloniki made the most significant investment in buying the new parcels of land. Actually, only 56% of total value of the sale bills were used for buying the new parcels. 18% of them were paid and 26% of them were not at all claimed by the land owners¹⁹. From this situation, it could be easily inferred that a major part of the fire-affected area passed in other hands during the reconstruction of the city.

The Jewish people were an inseparable part of Ottoman urban texture within the traditional city plan. It was impossible to reconstruct Thessaloniki without expelling the Jews. On the other hand, the Jews were not banned from buying new lands from the city center. On the contrary, they invested heavily in the central area of the city. A new synagogue and Stoa Modiano was built as the whole sale market for fruit and vegetables. These developments

¹⁸ Goldman, Hetty, *AJDC*, Newyork, 30 Kasım 1918, *AJDC*, 1914-1918.

were not only ethnic changes but also socio-economical. As the Government relied upon private investors in order to meet the cost of reconstruction activities, the richest and oldest residents of the center made the biggest profit. While they were returning, those who had sold their certificates or those who did not have enough money were pushed towards slums of the city. While the Jewish working class settled on the hills in south and west of the, the middle-class Jews were enjoying the sea view at their villas on Calamaria Road¹⁹.

The hotels, office blocks, apartments, cafes and cinemas of the inter-war period ended up with senseless Byzantine-Italian style and mode of diversity which Hebrard deemed suitable for the city as a whole. Lois XIV, neo-Renaissance, neo-Venice, neo-Moorish, Art Deco, “Mauritania-Islamic” and sometimes even Bauhaus style could be seen. There were also clearances and delays in constructions. Aristo Square in the coastline was completed in the 1950s and 1960s, and Eleftherias Square was planned as an open area which would be transformed into a parking lot later on. The planners emphasized the Byzantine features of the city as if they were interested in past rather than future. Mosques were converted into churches again or rebuilt like Saint Dimitrios Church. In the city built with a new identity, an archeological museum was not established, which drove the Ancient Monuments Inspector crazy. For that reason, he tried hard to get permission for preserving his Ma’min collection in the New Mosque²⁰.

Thanks to the operation of urbanization, the Greek Government managed to supervise lands and economy for years. These attempts aiming to make existence of Greek authority influential became successful in attracting external Greek capital here which was willing to invest. And it changed the economic structure of the city which had been under Jewish control until then.

In spite of all these, the distinctive features of 1920s were the increase in building construction and changes in population. During the “4 long years” of the liberal government which had been in power between 1928-1932, despite the significant affects of the Great Depression on Greek economy, some successful initiatives were launched for improving the

¹⁹ American Jew Joint Distribution Committee: Jewish War Victims Found-JDC, 20 February 1920, AJDC, 1919-1921, Greece, File:146. The city was separated by class differences rather than ethnic differences from 1890s onward. However, there was a deeper reality under the complaints of the Jewish leaders. The actual objective of the plan was to enable Greek officials to have supervision on the city center and it was succeeded indeed. This objective was contrary to the former organization at which the densely populated Jewish neighbourhoods of Ottoman Thessaloniki were dominant in the city center. Looking at the outline of the city streets, it can not be claimed that once upon a time there were 16th and 17th century synagogues (Mazower, a.g.e., p.336).

²⁰ Mazower, a.g.e., p. 338. Finally Thessaloniki Archeological Museum was established in 1962. The museum building that was built by Greek Architect Patroklo Karantino was accepted as a part of Modern Greek Architecture Movement. In 1980, an annex was added to the museum in order to exhibit ancient Macedonian tombs which had been found at Vergina archeological site in 1970s. The museum was completely renovated in 2002. There were also Derveni Crater, Statue of Arpokratis (B.C. 2nd century) and the marble gate of the Macedonian tomb in Agia Paraskevi among the significant masterpieces. One major and 2 or 5 minor temporary exhibitions in a year were held at the museum. (Archeological Museum of Thessaloniki, Museum Information Document, 2011).

required infrastructure that would be used in Thessaloniki and its hinterland and renewing the current buildings.

After 1912, buildings that would serve public institutions were built for the first time in Thessaloniki. The state, foreign missions, various organizations, industrial and commercial companies brought new types of buildings to the city. Five new bank buildings and a multi-storey concrete building at the area affected by the fire where commercial intensity was high displayed the first examples of neoclassicism: National Bank (A.P. Valvis-I. Isigonis, 1928), Ionia Public Bank (M. Lykoudis, 1929), Athens Bank (M. Axelos, 1926), East Bank (M. Filippotis, 1925) and Trade Bank (K. Kitsikis, 1926). Besides these buildings, the building of Chamber of Commerce and Industry (Dimitriadis Borthers, 1929) and Central Market (E. Modiano, 1929) represented the examples of late Greek neoclassicism²¹.

The appearance of commercial blocks like stores and offices at the area affected by the fire proved that this old business center of Thessaloniki was regaining its former characteristics. These commercial buildings would occupy the location of historical city center and they would identify the urban block forms set forth by Hebrard Plan together with the first examples of apartments that became popular thanks to the “Property Law” of 1929.

The apartment buildings of this period had a typical type of flat formation and reflected this uniformity to their appearances. In this period, hotels, club buildings, stores and similar buildings which were required by social life in a modern city were also built. At the outer side of the fortification walls, at Campagnes neighborhood where prosperous people lived, new residence buildings were built. Ouziel settlement were built (J. Moche, 1927); first summer houses appeared at Panorama and Nea Rysio (Aretsou) regions²².

In this period, basic industry branches like yarn, textile, tobacco, food and construction materials began to occur. The tobacco storehouses built just next to the buildings at the fire-affected area were in harmony with the contemporary urban architecture model. With their improved facade morphologies, they formed block images which intended to express the contribution of their landowners (which was the actual goal) to the reconstruction of the city.

The buildings of 1920s when was the fastest period of reconstruction initiatives reflected all tendencies of contemporary architecture of those times. It was true that modernized forms and movements of Bauhaus or even Art Deco were not popular in the buildings of the period. However, a neo-eclecticism which was enriched by morphological adaptations and adapted to concrete technology was a matter of fact. This eclecticism tried to include itself to the existing image of the city in terms of both architectural application and methodology. Between 1920-1923, with the arrival of thousands of Greek immigrants coming from Anatolia, the city extended very randomly to every direction. This extension was too fast that local and national officials under a lot of pressure could do nothing but only watch what was happening²³.

²¹ Colonas, **a.g.e.**, s.39.

²² Colonas, **a.g.m.**, s.39-40.

²³ Colonas, **a.g.m.**, s.40.

The plan of the streets at the city center remained surprisingly similar to the original version of the plan. However, the implementation of the plan declined at the out of the city center. Great plans offering neighborhoods with gardens and parks were not implemented. Many immigrants took shelter in tinsplate and wooden rambling cottages or military barracks and hospitals of French, Italian and English army. An exemplary working-class settlement remained half-finished. Architect Mawson's dream of building a new university campus next to the eastern fortification walls realized after the German invasion in World War II.

Conclusion

In the political plan of the post-fire, the decision of totally reorganizing historical Thessaloniki was included within the general framework of the innovative attempts of the period, and it conspicuously revealed the obstacles imposed by truths as much as reformist enthusiasm of liberals in power. According to the inclinations of the Greek administrators, the reorganisation of the city prevented reoccurring of traditional groups while it gave a new image to the city which was apt to the ideal of great neo-Hellenic city by creating environment for urban space and capital investment. Also, the reconstruction of Thessaloniki resulted in individuals' being expelled from their traditional areas and losing their resources under conditions of fierce competition.

The planners' failing to foresee new obstacles that the city may face after the fire of 1917 was another significant factor. Because, after Mustafa Kemal's new Turkish Army defeated the Greek army, a significant amount of Greek population flowed to the city with an unprecedented population exchange. As a result of the Turkish-Greek Population Exchange, Muslims had to leave the city. On the other hand, almost 100.000 Greek migrated to Thessaloniki from East Trace, Anatolia and Blacksea. This immigration process made Greek population a majority in Thessaloniki for the first time after Byzantine era. In the 1930s, Thessaloniki was a new city designed with new principles and populated with newcomers. In 1930, so few people could remember Thessaloniki as it had appeared in Sultan Abdülhamid II period²⁴.

Today, when we examine what happened during the post-Ottoman Thessaloniki, we see a city which accords or disaccords with its former times. At the uptown, many fountains disappeared between houses, old houses few in number welcomed their new owners, mosques lost their function because of lack of jamaah, public buildings changed shell, cemeteries was removed. The lost Ottoman spirit in Thessaloniki today still survives thanks to the White Tower which is the eternal symbol of the city iconography for those who come to the city by sea and the house of Ghazi Mustafa Kemal Atatürk who is the founder of Turkish Republic.

²⁴ Pallis, A., "Racial migrations in the Balkans during the year 1912-1924", *Geographical Journal*, 315-317; Darques, R., *Salonique au XXe siècle*, Paris, 2000, s.67-68, 103.

