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Deutschland Über Allah



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IT was commonly said at the beginning of this war that, whatever Germany's military resources might be, she was hopelessly and childishly lacking in diplomatic ability and in knowledge of psychology, from which all success in diplomacy is distilled. As instances of this grave defect, people adduced the fact that apparently she had not anticipated the entry of Great Britain into the war at all, while her treatment of Belgium immediately afterwards was universally pronounced not to be a crime merely, but a blunder of the stupidest sort. It is perfectly true that Germany did not understand, and, as seems likely in the light of innumerable other atrocities, never will understand, the psychology of civilised peoples; she has never shown any signs up till now, at any rate, of "having got the hang of it" at all. But critics of her diplomacy failed to see the root-fact that she did not understand it merely because it did not interest her. It was not worth her while to master the psychology of other civilised nations, since she was out not to understand them but to conquer them. She had all the information she wanted about their armies and navies and guns and ammunition neatly and correctly tabulated. Why, then, since this was all that concerned her, should she bother her head about what they might feel on the subject of gas-attacks or the torpedoing of neutral ships without warning? As long as her fumes were deadly and her submarines subtle, nothing further concerned her.

But Europe generally made a great mistake in supposing that she could not learn psychology and the process of its distillation into diplomacy when it interested her. The psychology of the French and English was a useless study, for she was merely going to fight them, but for years she had been studying with an industry and a patience that put our diplomacy to shame (as was most swiftly and ignominiously proven when it came into conflict with hers) the psychology of the Turks. For years she had watched the dealings of the Great Powers with Turkey, but she had never really associated herself with that policy. She sat quietly by and saw how it worked. Briefly it was this. For a hundred years Turkey had been a Sick Man, and for a hundred years he had been kept alive in Europe by the sedulous attentions of the Physician-Powers, who dared not let him die for fear of the stupendous quarrels which would instantly arise over his corpse. So there they all sat round his bed, and kept him alive with injections of strychnine and oxygen and, no less, by a policy of rousing and irritating the patient. All through the reign of Abdul Hamid they persevered: Great Britain plucked his pillow from him, so to speak, by her protectorate of Egypt; Russia tweaked Eastern Rumelia from him; France deprived him of his hot-water bottle when she snatched at the Constantinople quays, and they all shook and slapped him when he went to war with Greece in 1896, and instantly deprived him of the territory he had won in Thessaly. That was the principle of European diplomacy towards Turkey, and from it Germany always held aloof.

But from about the beginning of the reign of the present German Emperor, German or rather Prussian diplomacy had been going quietly about its work. It was worth while to study the psychology of the Turks, because dimly then, but with ever increasing distinctness, Germany foresaw that Turkey might be a counter of immense importance in the great conflict which was assuredly drawing nearer, though as yet its existence was but foreshadowed by the most distant reflections of summer lightning on a serene horizon. But if Turkey was to be of any profit to her, she wanted a strong Turkey who could fight with her (or rather for her), and she had no use for the Sick Man whom the other Powers were bent on keeping alive but no more. Her own eventual domination of Turkey was always the end in view, but she wanted to dominate not a weak but a strong servant. And her diplomacy was not less than brilliant simply from the facts that on the one hand it soothed Turkey instead of irritating, and on the other it went absolutely unnoticed for a long time. Nobody knew that it was going on. She sent officers to train the Turkish army, well knowing what magnificent material Anatolia afforded, and she had thoroughly grasped the salient fact that to make any way with Oriental peoples your purse

must be open and your backshish unlimited. “There is no God but backshish, and the Deutsche Bank is his prophet.”

For years this went on very quietly, and all over the great field of the Ottoman Empire the first tiny blades of the crop that Germany was sowing began to appear. To-day that crop waves high and covers the whole field with its ripe and fruitful ears. For to-day Turkey is neither more nor less than a German colony, and more than makes up to her for the colonies she has lost and hopes to regain. She knows that perfectly well, and so do any who have at all studied the history and the results of her diplomacy there. Even Turkey itself must, as in an uneasy dream, be faintly conscious of it. For who to-day is the Sultan of Turkey? No other than William II. of Germany. It is in Berlin that his Cabinet meets, and sometimes he asks Talaat Bey to attend in a strictly honorary capacity. And Talaat Bey goes back to Constantinople with a strictly honorary sword of honour. Or else he gives one to William II. from his *soi-disant* master, the Sultan, or takes one back to his *soi-disant* master from his real master. For no one knows better than William II. the use that swords of honour play in deeds of dishonour.

The object of this pamphlet is to trace the hewn and solid staircase of steps by which Germany's present supremacy over Turkey was achieved. Apart from the quiet spade-work that had been going on for some years, Germany made no important move till the moment when in 1909 the Young Turk party, after the forced abdication of Abdul Hamid, proclaimed the aims and ideal of the new régime. At once Germany saw her opportunity, for here, with her help, might arise the strong Turkey which she desired to see, instead of the weak Turkey which all the other European Powers had been keeping on a lowering diet for so long (desirous only that it should not quite expire), and from that moment she began to lend, or rather let, to Turkey in ever increasing quantities the resources of her scientific and her military knowledge. It was in her interests, if Turkey was to be of use to her, that she should educate, and irrigate, and develop the unexploited treasures of human material, of fertility and mineral wealth; and Germany's gold, her schools, her laboratories were at Turkey's disposal. But in every case she, as in duty bound to her people, saw that she got very good value for her outlay.

Here, then, was the great psychological moment when Germany instantly moved. The Young Turks proclaimed that they were going to weld the Ottoman Empire into one homogeneous and harmonious whole, and by a piece of brilliant paradoxical reasoning Germany determined that it was she who was going to do it for them. In flat contradiction of the spirit of their manifestos, which proclaimed the Pan-Turkish ideal, she conceived and began to carry out under their very noses the great new chapter of the Pan-Germanic ideal. And the Young Turks did not know the difference! They mistook that lusty Teutonic changeling for their own new-born Turkish babe, and they nursed and nourished it. Amazingly it thrived, and soon it cut its teeth, and one day, when they thought it was asleep, it arose from its cradle a baby no more but a great Prussian guardsman who shouted “Deutschland über Allah!”

Only once was there a check in the career of the Prussian infant, and that was no more than a childish ailment. For when the Balkan wars broke out the Turkish army was in the transitional stage. Its German tutors had not yet had time to inspire the army with German discipline and tradition; they had only weeded out, so to speak, the old Turkish spirit, the blind obedience to the ministers of the Shadow of God. The Shadow of God, in fact, in the person of the Sultan had been dragged out into the light, and his Shadow had grown appreciably less. In consequence there was not at this juncture any cohesion in the army, and it suffered reverse after reverse. But a strong though a curtailed Turkey was more in accordance with Prussian ideas than a weak and unformed one, and Germany bore the Turkish defeats very valiantly. And that was the only set-back that this Pan-Prussian youngster experienced, and it was no more than an attack of German measles which he very quickly got over. For two or three years German influence wavered, then recovered, “with blessings on the falling out, that all the more endears.”

It is interesting to see how Germany adapted the Pan-Turkish ideal to her own ends, and by a triumphant vindication of Germany's methods the best account of this Pan-Turkish ideal is to be found in a publication of 1915 by Tekin Alp, which was written as German propaganda and by Germany disseminated broadcast over the Turkish Empire. The movement was organised by Kemal Bey in 1909 as a branch committee of the Union and Progress Party at Constantinople, and its headquarters were in Salonica, where the deposed Abdul Hamid was subsequently confined. Another branch, under Zia Bey, worked at Constantinople. Kemal Bey collected a group of young and ardent writers, who exploited the idea of a restoration of a national and universal Turkey which should unite all Turkish elements, and, as was hinted even then, extirpate the other nationalities, such as the Armenians, which were a menace, or might conceivably be a menace, to complete Turkish autocracy. The young writers were supplemented by a group called Yeni Hayat, or the "Young Life," who worked for the restoration of national traditions. Certain opposition was met with, but this was overcome, and at once Kemal Bey and his assistants had the Koran translated into Turkish, and the prayers for the Khalif – in Arabic no longer, but in Turkish – were distributed throughout the Empire. Knowing full well that, apart from language, the religious bond of Islam was one of the strongest uniting forces, if not actually the strongest, at their disposal, they proclaimed that the true faith was the Turkish and not the Arab version. With a stupendous audacity they claimed this difference between the two, namely, that the Arab conception of Allah was the God of Vengeance, the Turkish conception the God of Love. The Turkish language and the Turkish Allah, God of Love, in whose name the Armenians were tortured and massacred, were the two wings on which Turkey was to soar. Auxiliary soaring societies were organised, among them a Turkish Ojagha with similar aims, and no fewer than sixteen branches of it were founded throughout the Empire. There were also a Turkish Guiji or gymnastic club and an Izji or boy scouts' club. A union of merchants worked for the same object in districts where hitherto trade had been in the hands of Greeks and Armenians, and signs appeared on their shops that only Turkish labour was employed. Religious funds also were used for similar economic restoration.

Turkey then was to be for the Turks, and so was a great deal more than Turkey. They claimed that of the 10,000,000 population of Persia one-third were Turks, while the province Azerbaijan – the richest, most active and enlightened district of Persia – was entirely Turkish. Similarly they regarded the country south of the Caucasus as Turkish, since Turks formed 50 to 80 per cent. of its population. Kasan, in fact, was Turkish, and if the Turks in the plain of the Volga, in the Crimea, and in the Caucasus were welded into Turkey, a nation of between forty and fifty million would be formed – Osmanlis all of them.

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