

CHAPTER IV

GERMANY MOBILIZES THE TURKISH ARMY

In reading the August newspapers, which described the mobilizations in Europe, I was particularly struck with the emphasis which they laid upon the splendid spirit that was overnight changing the civilian populations into armies. At that time Turkey had not entered the war and her political leaders were loudly protesting their intention of maintaining a strict neutrality. Despite these pacific statements, the occurrences in Constantinople were almost as warlike as those that were taking place in the European capitals. Though Turkey was at peace, her army was mobilizing, merely, we were told, as a precautionary measure. Yet the daily scenes which I witnessed in Constantinople bore few resemblances to those which were agitating every city of Europe. The martial patriotism of men, and the sublime patience and sacrifice of women, may sometimes give war an heroic aspect, but in Turkey the prospect was one of general listlessness and misery. Day by day the miscellaneous Ottoman hordes passed through the streets. Arabs, bootless and shoeless, dressed in their most gaily coloured garments, with long linen bags (containing the required five days' rations) thrown over their shoulders, shambling in their gait and bewildered in their manner, touched shoulders with equally dispirited Bedouins, evidently suddenly snatched from the desert.

A motley aggregation of Turks, Circassians, Greeks, Kurds, Armenians, and Jews, showing signs of having been summarily taken from their farms and shops, constantly jostled one another. Most were ragged and many looked half-starved; everything about them suggested hopelessness and a cattle-like submission to a fate which they knew that they could not avoid. There was no joy in approaching battle, no feeling that they were sacrificing themselves for a mighty cause; day by day they passed, the unwilling children of a tatterdemalion empire that was making one last despairing attempt to gird itself for action.

These wretched marchers little realized what was the power that was dragging them from the four corners of their country. Even we of the diplomatic group had not then clearly grasped the real situation. We learned afterward that the signal for this mobilization had not come originally from Enver or Talaat or the Turkish Cabinet, but from the General Staff in Berlin and its representatives in Constantinople. Liman von Sanders and Bronsart were really directing the complicated operation. There were unmistakable signs of German activity. As soon as the German armies crossed the Rhine, work was begun on a mammoth wireless station a few miles outside of Constantinople. The materials all came from Germany by way of Rumania, and the skilled mechanics, industriously working from daybreak to sunset, were unmistakably Germans. Of course, the neutrality laws would have prohibited the construction of a wireless station for a belligerent in a neutral country like Turkey; it was therefore officially announced that a German company was building this heaven-pointing structure for the Turkish Government and on the Sultan's own property. But this story deceived no one. Wangenheim, the German Ambassador, spoke of it freely and constantly as a German enterprise.

"Have you seen our wireless yet?" he would ask me. "Come on, let's ride up there and look it over."

He proudly told me that it was the most powerful in the world---powerful enough to catch all messages sent from the Eiffel Tower in Paris! He said that it would put him in constant communication with Berlin. So little did he attempt to conceal its German ownership that several times, when ordinary telegraphic communication was suspended, he offered to let me use it to send my telegrams.

This wireless plant was an outward symbol of the close though unacknowledged association which then existed between Turkey and Berlin. It took some time to finish such an extensive station and in the interim Wangenheim was using the apparatus on the *Corcovado*, a German merchant ship which was lying in the Bosphorus opposite the German Embassy. For practical purposes, Wangenheim had a constant telephone connection with Berlin.

German officers were almost as active as the Turks themselves in this mobilization. They enjoyed it all immensely; indeed they gave every sign that they were having the time of their lives. Bronsart, Humann, and Lafferts were constantly at Enver's elbow, advising and directing the operations. German officers were rushing through the streets every day in huge automobiles, all requisitioned from the civilian population; they filled all

the restaurants and amusement places at night, and celebrated their joy in the situation by consuming large quantities of champagne---also requisitioned. A particularly spectacular and noisy figure was that of Von der Goltz Pasha. He was constantly making a kind of vice-regal progress through the streets in a huge and madly dashing automobile, on both sides of which flaring German eagles were painted. A trumpeter on the front seat would blow loud, defiant blasts as the conveyance rushed along, and woe to any one, Turk or non-Turk, who happened to get in the way! The Germans made no attempt to conceal their conviction that they owned this town. Just as Wangenheim had established a little Wilhelmstrasse in his Embassy, so had the German military men established a sub-station of the Berlin General Staff. They even brought their wives and families from Germany; I heard Baroness Wangenheim remark that she was holding a little court at the German Embassy.

The Germans, however, were about the only people who were enjoying this proceeding. The requisitioning that accompanied the mobilization really amounted to a wholesale looting of the civilian population. The Turks took all the horses, mules, camels, sheep, cows, and other beasts that they could lay their hands on; Enver told me that they had gathered in 150,000 animals. They did it most unintelligently, making no provision for the continuance of the species; thus they would leave only two cows or two mares in many of the villages. This system of requisitioning, as I shall describe, had the inevitable result of destroying the nation's agriculture, and ultimately led to the starvation of hundreds of thousands of people. But the Turks, like the Germans., thought that the war was destined to be a very short one, and that they would quickly recuperate from the injuries which their methods of supplying an army were causing their peasant population. The Government showed precisely the same shamelessness and lack of intelligence in the way that they requisitioned materials from merchants and shopmen. These proceedings amounted to little less than conscious highwaymanship. But practically none of these merchants were Moslems; most of them were Christians, though there were a few Jews; and the Turkish officials therefore not only provided the needs of their army and incidentally lined their own pockets, but they found a religious joy in pillaging the infidel establishments. They would enter a retail shop, take practically all the merchandise on the shelves, and give merely a piece of paper in acknowledgment. As the Government had never paid for the supplies which it had taken in the Italian and Balkan wars, the merchants hardly expected that they would ever receive anything for these latest requisitions. Afterward many who understood officialdom, and were politically influential, did recover to the extent of 70 per cent what became of the remaining 30 per cent. is not a secret to those who have had experience with Turkish bureaucrats.

Thus for most of the population requisitioning simply meant financial ruin. That the process was merely pillaging is shown by many of the materials which the army took, ostensibly for the use of the soldiers. Thus the officers seized all the mohair they could find; on occasion they even carried off women's silk stockings, corsets, and baby's slippers, and I heard of one case in which they reinforced the Turkish commissary with caviar and other delicacies. They demanded blankets from one merchant who was a dealer in women's underwear; because he had no such stock, they seized what he had, and he afterward saw his appropriated goods reposing in rival establishments. The Turks did the same thing in many other cases. The prevailing system was to take movable property wherever available and convert it into cash; where the money ultimately went I do not know., but that many private fortunes were made I have little doubt. I told Enver that this ruthless method of mobilizing and requisitioning was destroying his country. Misery and starvation soon began to afflict the land. Out of a 4,000,000 adult male population more than 1,500,000 were ultimately enlisted and so about a million families were left without breadwinners, all of them in a condition of extreme destitution. The Turkish Government paid its soldiers 25 cents a month, and gave the families a separation allowance of \$1.20 a month. As a result thousands were dying from lack of food and many more were enfeebled by malnutrition; I believe that the empire has lost a quarter of its Turkish population since the war started. I asked Enver why he permitted his people to be destroyed in this way. But sufferings like these did not distress him. He was much impressed by his success in raising a large army with practically no money ---something, he boasted, which no other nation had ever done before. In order to accomplish this, Enver had issued orders which stigmatized the evasion of military service as desertion and therefore punishable with the death penalty. He also adopted a scheme by which any Ottoman could obtain exemption by the payment of about \$190. Still Enver regarded his accomplishment as a notable one. It was really his first taste of unlimited power and he enjoyed the experience greatly.

That the Germans directed this mobilization is not a matter of opinion but of proof. I need only mention that the Germans were requisitioning materials in their own name for their own uses. I have a photographic copy of such a requisition made by Humann, the German naval attaché, for a shiplot of oil cake. This document is

dated September 29, 1914. "The lot by the steamship *Derindje* which you mentioned in your letter of the 26th," this paper reads, "has been requisitioned by me for the German Government." This clearly shows that, a month before Turkey had entered the war, Germany was really exercising the powers of sovereignty at Constantinople.