

CHAPTER VIII

A CLASSIC INSTANCE OF GERMAN PROPAGANDA

In those August and September days Germany had no intention of precipitating Turkey immediately into the war. As I then had a deep interest in the welfare of the Turkish people and in maintaining peace, I telegraphed Washington asking if I might use my influence to keep Turkey neutral. I received a reply that I might do this provided that I made my representations unofficially and purely upon humanitarian grounds. As the English and the French ambassadors were exerting all their efforts to keep Turkey out of the war, I knew that my intervention in the same interest would not displease the British Government. Germany, however, might regard any interference on my part as an unneutral act, and I asked Wangenheim if there would be any objection from that source.

His reply somewhat surprised me, though I saw through it soon afterward. "Not at all," he said. "Germany desires, above all, that Turkey shall remain neutral."

Undoubtedly Turkey's policy at that moment precisely fitted in with German plans. Wangenheim was steadily increasing his ascendancy over the Turkish Cabinet, and Turkey was then pursuing the course that best served the German aims. Her policy was keeping the Entente on tenterhooks; it never knew from day to day where Turkey stood, whether she would remain neutral or enter the war on Germany's side. Because Turkey's attitude was so uncertain, Russia was compelled to keep large forces in the Caucasus, England was obliged to strengthen her forces in Egypt and India, and to maintain a considerable fleet at the mouth of the Dardanelles. All this worked in beautifully with Germany's plans, for these detached forces just so much weakened England and Russia on the European battle front. I am now speaking of the period just before the Marne, when Germany expected to defeat France and Russia with the aid of her ally, Austria; and thus obtain a victory that would have enabled her to dictate the future of Europe. Should Turkey at that time be actually engaged in military operations, she could do no more toward bringing about this victory than she was doing now, by keeping considerable Russian and English forces away from the most important fronts. But should Germany win this easy victory, with Turkey's aid, she might find her new ally an embarrassment. Turkey would certainly demand compensation and she would not be particularly modest in her demands, which most likely would include the full control of Egypt and perhaps the return of Balkan territories. Such readjustments would have interfered with the Kaiser's plans. Thus he had no interest in having Turkey as an active ally, except in the event that he did not speedily win his anticipated triumph. But if Russia should make great progress against Austria, then Turkey's active alliance would have great value, especially if her entry should be so timed as to bring in Bulgaria and Rumania as allies. Meanwhile, Wangenheim was playing a waiting game, making Turkey a potential German ally, strengthening her army and her navy, and preparing to use her, whenever the moment arrived for using her to the best advantage. If Germany could not win the war without Turkey's aid, Germany was prepared to take her in as an ally; if she could win without Turkey, then she would not have to pay the Turk for his cooperation. Meanwhile, the sensible course was to keep her prepared in case the Turkish forces became essential to German success.

The duel that now took place between Germany and the Entente for Turkey's favour was a most unequal one. The fact was that Germany had won the victory when she smuggled the *Goeben* and the *Breslau* into the Sea of Marmora. The English, French, and Russian ambassadors well understood this, and they knew that they could not make Turkey an active ally of the Entente; they probably had no desire to do so, but they did hope that they might keep her neutral. To this end they now directed all their efforts. "You have had enough of war," they would tell Talaat and Enver. "You have fought two wars in the last four years; you will ruin your country absolutely if you get involved in this one." The Entente had only one consideration to offer Turkey for her neutrality, and this was an offer to guarantee the integrity of the Ottoman Empire. The Entente ambassadors showed their great desire to keep Turkey out of the war by their disinclination to press to the limit their case against the *Breslau* and the *Goeben*. It is true that they repeatedly protested against the continued presence of these ships, but every time the Turkish officials maintained that they were Turkish vessels.

"If that is so," Sir Louis Mallet would urge, and his argument was unassailable, "why don't you remove the German officers and crews?" That was the intention, the Grand Vizier would answer; the Turkish crews that

had been sent to man the ships which had been built in England, he would say, were returning to Turkey and they would be put on board the *Goeben* and the *Breslau* as soon as they reached Constantinople. But days and weeks went by; these crews came home, and still Germany manned and officered the cruisers. These backings and fillings naturally did not deceive the British and French foreign offices. The presence of the *Goeben* and the *Breslau* was a standing *casus belli*, but the Entente ambassadors did not demand their passports, for such an act would have precipitated the very crisis which they were seeking to delay, and, if possible, to avoid---Turkey's entrance as Germany's ally. Unhappily the Entente's promise to guarantee Turkey's integrity did not win Turkey to their side.

"They promised that we should not be dismembered after the Balkan wars," Talaat would tell me, "and see what happened to European Turkey then."

Wangenheim constantly harped upon this fact. "You can't trust anything they say," he would tell Talaat and Enver, "didn't they all go back on you a year ago?" And then with great cleverness he would play upon the only emotion which really actuates the Turk. The descendants of Osman hardly resemble any people I have ever known. They do not hate, they do not love; they have no lasting animosities or affections. They only fear. And naturally they attribute to others the motives which regulate their own conduct. "How stupid you are," Wangenheim would tell Talaat and Enver, discussing the English attitude. "Don't you see why the English want you to keep out? It is because they fear you. Don't you see that, with the help of Germany, you have again become a great military power? No wonder England doesn't want to fight you! " He dinned this so continually in their ears that they finally believed it, for this argument not only completely explained to them the attitude of the Entente, but it flattered Turkish pride.

Whatever may have been the attitude of Enver and Talaat, I think that England and France were more popular with all classes in Turkey than was Germany. The Sultan was opposed to war; the heir apparent, Youssouff Isseddin, was openly pro-Ally; the Grand Vizier, Saïd Halim, favoured England rather than Germany; Djemal, the third member of the ruling triumvirate, had the reputation of being a Francophile---he had recently returned from Paris, where the reception he had received had greatly flattered him; a majority of the Cabinet had no enthusiasm for Germany; and public opinion, so far as public opinion existed in Turkey, regarded England, not Germany, as Turkey's historic friend. Wangenheim, therefore, had much opposition to overcome, and the methods which he took to break it down form a classic illustration of German propaganda. He started a lavish publicity campaign against England, France, and Russia. I have described the feelings of the Turks at losing their ships in England. Wangenheim's agents now filled columns of purchased space in the newspapers with bitter attacks on England for taking over these vessels. The whole Turkish press rapidly passed under the control of Germany. Wangenheim purchased the *Ikdam*, one of the largest Turkish newspapers, which immediately began to sing the praises of Germany and to abuse the Entente. The *Osmanischer Lloyd*, published in French and German, became an organ of the German Embassy. Although the Turkish Constitution guaranteed a free press, a censorship was established in the interest of the Central Powers. All Turkish editors were ordered to write in Germany's favour and they obeyed instructions. The *Jeune Turc*, a pro-Entente newspaper, printed in French, was suppressed. The Turkish papers exaggerated German victories and completely manufactured others; they were constantly printing the news of Entente defeats, most of them wholly imaginary. In the evening Wangenheim and Pallavicini would show me official telegrams giving the details of military operations, but when, in the morning, I would look in the newspapers, I would find that this news had been twisted or falsified in Germany's favour. A certain Baron Oppenheim, travelled all over Turkey manufacturing public opinion against England and France. Ostensibly he was an archaeologist, while in reality he opened offices everywhere from which issued streams of slander against the Entente. Huge maps were pasted on walls, showing all the territory which Turkey had lost in the course of a century. Russia was portrayed as the nation chiefly responsible for these "robberies," and attention was drawn to the fact that England had now become Russia's ally. Pictures were published, showing the grasping powers of the Entente as rapacious animals, snatching at poor Turkey. Enver was advertised as the "hero" who had recovered Adrianople; Germany was pictured as Turkey's friend; the Kaiser suddenly became "Hadji Wilhelm," the great protector of Islam, and stories were even printed that he had become a convert to Mohammedanism. The Turkish populace was informed that the Moslems of India and of Egypt were about to revolt and throw off their English "tyrants." The Turkish man-on-the-street was taught to say, "*Gott Strafe England*," and all the time the motive power of this infamous campaign was German money.

But Germany was doing more than poisoning the Turkish mind; she was appropriating Turkey's military resources. I have already described how, in January, 1914, the Kaiser had taken over the Turkish army and rehabilitated it in preparation for the European war. He now proceeded to do the same thing with the Turkish navy. In August, Wangenheim boasted to me that, " We now control both the Turkish army and navy." At the time the *Goeben* and *Breslau* arrived, an English mission, headed by Admiral Limpus, was hard at work restoring the Turkish navy. Soon afterward Limpus and his associates were unceremoniously dismissed; the manner of their going was really disgraceful, for not even the most ordinary courtesies were shown them. The English naval officers quietly and unobservedly left Constantinople for England--all except the Admiral himself, who had to remain longer because of his daughter's illness.

Night after night whole carloads of Germans landed at Constantinople from Berlin; the aggregations to the population finally amounted to 3,800 men, most of them sent to man the Turkish navy and to manufacture ammunition. They filled the cafés every night, and they paraded the streets of Constantinople in the small hours of the morning, howling and singing German patriotic songs. Many of them were skilled mechanics, who immediately went to work repairing the destroyers and other ships and putting them in shape for war. The British firm of Armstrong & Vickers had a splendid dock in Constantinople, and this the Germans now appropriated. All day and night we could hear this work going on and we could hardly sleep because of the hubbub of riveting and hammering. Wangenheim, now found another opportunity for instilling more poison into the minds of Enver, Talaat, and Djemal. The German workers, he declared, had found that the Turkish ships were in a desperate state of disrepair, and for this he naturally blamed the English naval mission. He said that England had deliberately let the Turkish navy go to decay and he asserted that this was all a part of England's plot to ruin Turkey! "Look!" he would exclaim, "see what we Germans have done for the Turkish army, and see what the English have done for your ships!" As a matter of fact, all this was untrue, for Admiral Limpus had worked hard and conscientiously to improve the navy and had accomplished excellent results in that direction.

All this time the Germans were working at the Dardanelles, seeking to strengthen the fortifications, and preparing for a possible Allied attack. As September lengthened into October, the Sublime Porte practically ceased to be the headquarters of the Ottoman Empire. I really think that the most influential seat of authority at that time was a German merchant ship, the *General*. It was moored in the Golden Horn, at the Galata Bridge, and a permanent stairway had been built, leading to its deck. I knew well one of the most frequent visitors to this ship, an American who used to come to the embassy and entertain me with stories of what was going on.

The *General*, this American now informed me, was practically a German club or hotel. The officers of the *Goeben* and the *Breslau* and other German officers who had been sent to command the Turkish ships ate and slept on board. Admiral Souchon, who had brought the German cruisers to Constantinople, presided over these gatherings. Souchon was a man of French Huguenot extraction; he was a short, dapper, clean-cut sailor, very energetic and alert, and to the German passion for command and thoroughness he added much of the Gallic geniality and buoyancy. Naturally he gave much liveliness to the evening parties on the *General*, and the beer and champagne which were liberally dispensed on these occasions loosened the tongues of his fellow officers. Their conversation showed that they entertained no illusions as to who really controlled the Turkish navy. Night after night their impatience for action grew; they kept declaring that, if Turkey did not presently attack the Russians, they would force her to do so. They would relate how they had sent German ships into the Black Sea, in the hope of provoking the Russian fleet to some action that would make war inevitable. Toward the end of October my friend told me that hostilities could not much longer be avoided; the Turkish fleet had been fitted for action, everything was ready, and the impetuosity of these *kriegslustige* German officers could not much longer be restrained.

"They are just like a lot of boys with chips on their shoulders! They are simply spoiling for a fight!" he said.