

The Re-Making of Turkey

By H. LINTON ECCLES



HAVE just had the privilege of an interview with Muhammad Adil Schmitz du Moulin, one of the founders and leaders of the Young Turks Society. This gentleman is in London, empowered by the Turkish Foreign Office to treat with the British Government for its support to the new movement

which is regenerating the Ottoman Empire.

The story of the rise of the Young Turks Society is also the story of the dawn of a new era in what has always been looked upon as the land of oppressors and oppressed. The inner history of the movement will probably never see the light of publicity, but there is still a long and thrilling chapter worth the telling; a chapter in which all Europe and the East is absorbed at the present time. It has been planned and worked out like a game of chess—the greatest and most interesting that has been fought within recent memory.

Everybody has read of the drastic reforms accomplished in spite of almost superhuman difficulties by the Young Turks. These would have been substantial enough in any country, but in Turkey, surely in many ways the most reactionary country of the world, the changes for the better can only be looked upon as wonderful.

"Let me tell you," said Muhammad Adil to me in his excellent English, "that the Young Turks movement was not, nor was it intended to be, a revolutionary one. Its keynote was loyalty to the Sultan and to our country. From the beginning we set our objects down as justice to all and the suppression of corruption. Beyond that we were not prepared to go. I do not think the time has come for a Parliament in Turkey yet; the people need to be educated up to the idea, and they do not realise at present what a parliament is.

"The Sultan has been generally blamed for the bad state of affairs existing in his country, but, as I think, wrongly. Foreigners do not rightly understand his position. Ever since, as an inexperienced young man who never expected to become Sultan, he was called to the throne, he has been surrounded by a camarilla, a wall of officials as impenetrable as those more material ones surrounding his palace. The Sultan was naturally timid, and gradually though surely he had come to be ruled by his officials as though he were the meanest subject in the land. Lacking moral strength, even this could have availed him little after the bureaucracy had once got the power of government in their hands. Things became so bad that it was impossible for him to know whom to trust, and the slightest resistance on his part would have meant assassination by the agents of the officials.

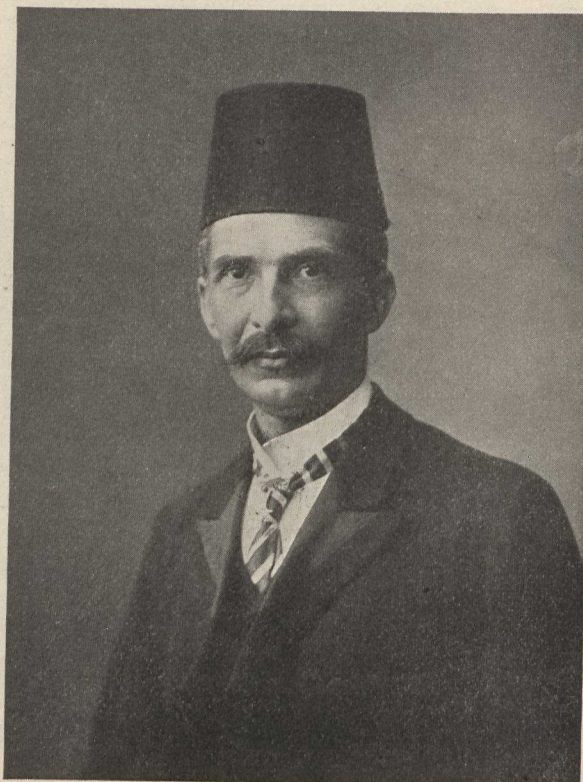
"These agents were the secret police, compared with whom the Russian police service is quite civilised in its methods. The state of affairs for which the Turkish secret police were responsible is scarcely imaginable to an English mind. It was impossible to meet at any house or to walk in the streets to the number of four without some one or other of their agents immediately joining the company to listen to the conversation. If any resistance was offered the resisters were at once arrested.

"Their methods were swift, sharp and primitive. The persons whose existence was inconvenient to the secret police or their employers were 'removed,' which simply meant that nobody ever saw or heard of them again. Thousands of the best men in Turkey have 'disappeared' within the past few years through the tainted agency of this secret police. In my opinion, forty thousand would be a low estimate, but the exact number can, of course, never be known.

"I know a tower where late one evening they brought about forty men. I heard the captives screaming in the night; the next morning not one of them was to be found. Then a German trading steamer anchored in the Bosphorus, just in front of the royal palace. The police sent peremptory orders for the boat to go away. The captain with some difficulty weighed anchor in compliance with the command, and drew up with it several dead bodies. We now know that the captain of the boat was heavily bribed to keep his mouth closed over the incident.

"These high-handed and dictatorial—not to say barbarous—proceedings went on unchecked, accompanied by daily disappearances of kinsmen and

friends, until the people were reduced to such a state as to go about in fear of their own shadows. No man trusted his neighbour. Intimate friends dared only speak together on the most ordinary



Muhammad Adil Schmitz du Moulin, Leader of the Young Turks' Movement.

matters, so insidious and wide-reaching was the influence of the secret police.

"Then it was that a few men resolved to save their country from this terrible scourge. We knew we could implicitly trust each other, and we were prepared, if need be, to sacrifice our lives for the cause. We were hedged round about with dangers and difficulties all the more to be feared because we could not be certain where to expect them. The only way possible for us to proceed was by forming ourselves into a secret society. This was done on October 20th, 1904, at Bebek, on the Bosphorus, in the house of my friend, His Excellency Abdul Kerim Hadi Bey, the Sultan's private secretary. He and another bosom friend of mine, Dr. Joseph Tanni Bey, chemist to his majesty and a pupil of the great Professor Bunsen, were the first men to join me. That evening we drew up our constitution, and settled the principles and direction in which we should work. The following day we took into our confidence Abdul Fethao Effendi, leader of the Albanian party.

"From this small beginning the society spread with amazing rapidity. During the month of Ramadan (the Moslem month of fasting) our principles were preached in every mosque in Constantinople. Then we knew that we had the solid mass of the lower clergy on our side, and that each mosque had become a mission for the teaching of our propaganda. We welcomed to our society every honest man, without distinction of race or creed, provided he was a true Ottoman.

"Our first principles were very simple. They were: Justice to all, and the Ottoman Empire for the Ottomans. We pledged ourselves to use our utmost endeavours to put down thieves, usurers, and scoundrels, no matter what their rank. Many other details of our constitution relate strictly to internal affairs and have no bearing on anything or anybody outside of Turkey. But I may say definitely that there is nothing in it of aggression or interference with any foreign country or nation. We confined ourselves purely to our own affairs.

"Within a year the society had spread itself over the whole empire. It has been a remarkable and effective means of organising the people, of educating them in the principles of self-help, and above all of giving them once more confidence in themselves and in their leaders. The most remarkable feature about the movement is that it has brought into one brotherhood all the different creeds and races that exist in our very complex social life. Its greatest achievement is that it has swept away

the wall of selfish and bureaucratic officials that surrounded the Sultan, without endangering his life, and simply by showing the people the power that was in themselves.

"Our opportunity came when Austria proposed to build a railway through the Sandschak of Novibazar—a project that has since been shelved. It meant the dismemberment of the empire, and was an ill-considered undertaking of Austria, whose interests would certainly not be served by the ruin of Turkey.

"From the beginning we put our faith in the British Government. It is an old saying in our country that when Turkey was in dire need of help she would get it from the greatest power of the West. The saying has been abundantly justified. The British Government deserves the everlasting gratitude of the Turkish nation for its efforts to save them from ruin. It was in our hardest hour of trial that the British people made the rough path to reform smooth and safe."

Muhammad Adil then went on to tell me some stories concerning the life of the Sultan which are not generally known to Westerners. Some of them, indeed, are quite new. It is a strange fact that Abdul Hamid had never become Sultan but for the merest chance. His father never liked the child. In a fit of drunken frenzy one day he seized hold of the boy and flung him into a pond, forbidding any one of his followers, upon pain of death, to rescue him.

But one of the Albanian bodyguard, disregarding the brutal command, jumped into the water and pulled out the child, who was all but drowned. Then stepping up to the Sultan he said: "If you want to kill the child you must first kill me." This brave Albanian is still alive, and now commands the trusted bodyguard of the Sultan whose life he saved.

As an instance of the precarious position in which the Sultan until recently stood, Muhammad Adil told me the following story, which concerns the predecessor in office of the before-mentioned chief of the bodyguard. This predecessor, whom everybody looked upon as the Sultan's greatest favourite, died suddenly some time back, and no one dared to take the news to the Sultan. Eventually the difficulty was settled by all those concerned drawing lots. The fated loser went in fear and trembling to Abdul, despairing of his life, but when he had faltered out his story, the Sultan was graciousness itself towards him. He praised him and gave him a heavy purse of gold. The servant then ventured to remark that the Sultan did not seem sorry to hear the news of the death of the man upon whom he had been pleased to bestow his friendship. "You are mistaken," said the Sultan; "he was the biggest scoundrel in my service. I had to be kind to him, otherwise he would have robbed me more."

The Sultan, contrary to the general belief, is a strenuous worker. He rises punctually at five o'clock every morning, having been busy until a late hour of the night. A friend of Muhammad Adil's recently stayed for some weeks as the guest of the Sultan. He was honoured by being given a room next to the study of the Sultan to sleep in. Having to get out of bed one night between 1 and 2 o'clock to answer an urgent message, the gentleman had to pass the Sultan's door, which was wide open. Abdul was hard at work with a pile of papers before him. When the guest returned the Sultan was reclining on a bench, with a rosary in his fingers. He was telling his prayers as a change from work! It is an interesting little vignette of this oriental ruler who is so much in the public eye just now, and it has the additional merit of being well authenticated.

Eliminate Middlemen

(Vancouver World.)

WE ship large quantities of what is the raw material of industries carried on elsewhere, but there is no good reason why we should not, like the British operators, carry our manufacturing processes farther and supply the consumer abroad with what he wants direct from British Columbia without the intervention of numerous middlemen. The Washington manufacturers, indeed, have already led the way in this matter. They have sent forward samples of fir, lumber, spruce, hemlock and cedar, finished and stained in many different ways, and have worked up a considerable business in eastern and foreign markets.