

## Armenia

ARMENIA is receiving a good deal of attention just at present both from the French and English governments, and from the charity organizations which make it their special business to try to cover up the sores which the recent war has left running.

But now what about Armenia? Why should the English and French governments have a special policy towards this insignificant stretch of rocky hills and barren valleys? Why should these governments agitate to have Armenia erected into a state, independent of the Sultan's rule? Some people tell us that it is to save the Christian Armenians who have for many years suffered from the cruelty and barbarity of their Turkish oppressors. This is the reason actually given by preachers and editors who take upon themselves to interpret the wherefore of State policy.

However, while such a line of reasoning might be considered a good argument to a Sunday school class, it does not at all satisfy men who know something about the world and the forces which are active in bringing about changes in it. In fact, the religious argument that is offered for public consumption today is altogether refuted by the policies of the various European powers towards Turkey and the Near East for the last century. For this reason one can neglect this seemingly plausible argument in trying to indicate the character of the forces which have been active in shaping the policy of the British and French governments toward Armenia.

As Armenia is a part of the domain of the Sultan, one cannot approach to an understanding of the Armenian question except through understanding the peculiar position of Turkey in European politics. Turkey has probably caused more grey hairs among European diplomatists than any other country on the globe. It is not without reason that the Sultan has been called "The Sick Man of Europe." But what has made the Sultan the sick man? Turkey's troubles are primarily due to its uncongenial geographical situation. Occupying the territory at which Europe and Asia touch hands, it lies in the zone where the lines of expansion of the great European powers converge. The point at which two opposing forces converge will have to stand a good deal of pressure, proportionate to the energy behind the forces. Thus it was that the expansion of Russia southward and of England eastwards, during the middle period of last century, produced such pressure at Constantinople that the reaction caused the Sultan to adopt measures towards his Christian subjects which aroused a storm of indignation among the very people whose craving for empire was upsetting his mental equilibrium. As we know, Russia wanted Constantinople, but England was opposed to this, fearing lest the Czar might seize the Suez Canal, and thus cut off England's shortest trade-route to India. Moreover, if the Czar obtained Constantinople he could as easily as not prevent all British expansion in Asia, and to this fate enterprising British investors could not dream of submitting. Hence in the Crimean War and again in the troubles of the 70's, we find England using her influence and her power to protect the barbarous Turk against the designs of the Czar. Now it is a curious fact that England's solicitousness for the integrity of the Turkish Empire ceased after she had induced the Sultan to cede Cyprus to her, and also after the decision of the other European powers in the Berlin Treaty compelled Russia to push her expansion eastward across Siberia, in other words, after the Russian menace in southern Europe had been obviated.

After 1878, a golden age of British expansion in Asia ensued. During this period English diplomats

seemed to preserve a serene calm towards the Sultan. They were evidently well satisfied with the outcome of the arrangements made at the Berlin Conference. This state of mental repose, however, received a rude shock when it became apparent, in the opening years of this century, that German capitalism had peacefully penetrated Turkey, and had gained an enormous influence over the Sultan; indeed, had really made him one of its puppets. The completeness of the control which German capitalism had gained over the Sultan's government and the vigor with which it pushed this advantage so as to gain a foothold in western Asia, made it clear that this new menace to British supremacy in western and southern Asia was of a nature which made the Russian menace of last century sink into insignificance. It compelled English diplomats to re-examine the policy pursued at the Berlin conference, and they have invariably found that a big mistake was made. Some critics even go so far as to say that England should have allowed Russia to take Constantinople. Lord Salisbury has characterized the British policy of '78 as "putting the money on the wrong horse"—meaning of course Turkey. Since then, the idea has gained ground among British diplomats that Constantinople should, after all, be made into an international port. This seemingly liberal and cosmopolitan view has its roots deeply buried in the stress of untoward circumstances.

The fact is that the south-eastern direction of development of German capitalism made British supremacy in western and southern Asia appear very precarious. The Germans had two projects which especially seemed planned to overthrow British power. The one was the Bagdad railway which made a bee-line toward India, and would, if it had been completed and successfully operated, have enabled the German capitalists to offer the British serious competition, both on the markets of India, and of the South Sea Islands. This line, however, was never completed as planned because the British government would not allow its promoters to secure a terminus on the Persian Gulf. The other project was a railway running down through Palestine and to the Suez Canal. This line was always considered an extremely serious menace by the British, and, without doubt, whetted the bitterness that existed between the London and Berlin governments.

From a military point of view, the building of this line was a strategic move. For a comparatively small force of soldiers could, by its means, be shipped down to the Suez and stationed along its banks, and once stationed there could hold a comparatively large force at bay. Moreover, towards a land force thus placed, the attacks of a fleet would prove almost worthless. To combat such a tactic England's double-strength navy would be of no considerable consequence.

The situation just before the war broke out was something after this fashion. Turkey was a camping ground for German capitalism, the Sultan its political puppet, and Constantinople an outpost from which two steel fingers had been projected; the one had been thrust at the very heart of British supremacy in Asia, and the other threatened to cut Britain's main artery of communication with the markets of the Orient. Now with this situation in mind it is easy to understand the wherefore of the disastrous Gallipoli expedition, and the anxiety of the British government for the successful termination of the Palestine and Mesopotamian expedition. It was not to wrest Jerusalem from the infidel hands of the Turk, nor to regain Armenia from the barbarous rule of the Moham-

medan, that one expedition was sent from Cairo to Jerusalem and the other from India to Bagdad, but it was simply to ensure that these two lines of railway should not be left in hands which would use them against British interests in the future.

Now with the conclusion of the war comes the question of the disposition of the Sultan and his dominion. He has proven such a pliable tool in the hands of the enemies of British imperialistic interests, that the British government would like to turn him out of Europe altogether and let him seek dominion elsewhere. Besides this government wants Constantinople—the gateway between Europe and Asia—turned into an international port, in the hope that this may prevent any nation in the future turning this city into an outpost from which to send threatening expeditions against British spheres of influence and territory in Asia. But to turn the Sultan from the Porte at this moment is a rather dangerous thing to do, because of the none too kindly attitude of all the Mohammedans towards the British government. There is a possibility that the Mohammedans both in India and elsewhere might rise in revolt should their Caliph be ousted from his seat of power, both in the church and the state. This compels another course to be pursued—namely that of walling in the Sultan and clipping his wings so to speak.

It is here that the Armenian policy of the British and French governments comes into play. As this policy is somewhat involved, and as the conflict existing between the two governments has not had time to come to the surface yet, no one can say with any degree of certainty what final shape this policy will assume, but still we can get a glimpse of what the effect on British interests will be if Armenia is finally severed from the Turkish Empire. A glance at a map shows the strategic position of Armenia. It cuts clean across the western peninsula of Asia from north to south, touches the Mediterranean just east of the Island of Cyprus, and commands the approach from Europe to both the Bagdad and Anatolia railways. So a state could not be better located than is Armenia for the purpose of making a Chinese wall out of it. This it is that, in the opinion of the writer, the British government wants to make of Armenia. Behind this wall British interests can expand and entrench themselves as never before, because they will be comparatively safe from such insidious rivalry as threatened them twice previously. Moreover, by placing a trusty sentinel on guard they need not fear any enemy or rival except the one who possesses the physical force required to storm the wall and force his way in. But it will become doubly difficult for a rival to do this if Constantinople is made an international port, or the Dardanelles an international strait. Thus by its Armenian policy the British government is trying to kill two birds with one stone.

It was with some interest the writer picked up and read today's paper, as it contains two announcements which indicate that the above speculations are not altogether fanciful dreams. One announcement has it that the Allied Supreme Council has decided to allow England to control Mesopotamia and Syria—new sections to the wall—and the other, that a British syndicate has secured a concession from the Persian government for the building of an important railway, the building of which will enable the Caspian gate to be fortified and closed to the outside world—entrenching British capitalism in the east.

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