

# AMBASSADOR MORGENTHAU TELLS OF GERMAN INTRIGUE IN TURKEY

BY HENRY MORGENTHAU, Formerly American Ambassador to Turkey. (Copyrighted.)

Another question, which had been under discussion for several months, now became involved in the Turkish International situation. That was the matter of the capitulations. These were the treaty rights which for centuries had regulated the position of foreigners in the Turkish empire. Turkey had never been admitted to a complete equality with European nations, and in reality she had never been an independent sovereignty. The sultan's laws and customs differed so radically from those of Europe and America that no non-Moslem country could think of submitting its citizens in Turkey to them. In many matters, therefore, the principle of extraterritoriality had always prevailed in favor of all citizens or subjects of countries enjoying capitulatory rights. Almost all European countries as well as the United States for centuries had had their own consular courts and

prisons in which they tried and punished crimes which their nationals committed in Turkey. We all had our schools which were subject, not to Turkish law and protection, but to that of the country which maintained them. This Robert College and the Constantinople college for women, these wonderful institutions which American philanthropy has erected on the Bosphorus, as well as hundreds of American religious, charitable, and educational institutions, practically stood on American territory and looked upon the American embassy as their guardian. Several nations had their own postoffices, as they did not care to submit their mail to the Ottoman postal service. Turkey likewise did not have unlimited power of taxation over foreigners. It could not even increase their customs taxes without the consent of the foreign powers. In 1914 it could impose only 11 per cent in tariff dues, and was attempting to secure the right to increase the amount to 14. We have always regarded England as the only free-trade country, overlooking the fact that this limitation in Turkey's customs dues had practically made the Ottoman empire an unwilling follower of Cobden. Turkey was thus prohibited by the powers from developing any industries of her own; instead, she was forced to take large quantities of inferior articles from Europe. Against these restrictions Turkish statesmen had protested for years, declaring that they constituted an insult to their pride as a nation and also interfered with their progress. However, the agreement was a bi-lateral one, and Turkey could not change it without the consent of all the contracting powers. Yet certainly by the present moment, when both the entente and the central powers were cultivating Turkey, served to furnish a valuable opportunity to make the change. And so, as soon as the Germans had begun their march toward

Paris the air was filled with reports that Turkey intended to abrogate the capitulations. Rumor said that Germany had secured the consent of the consideration for Turkish aid in the war, and that England had agreed to the abrogation, as part of her payment for Turkish neutrality. Neither of these reports was true. What was manifest, however, was the panic which the mere suggestion of abrogation produced on the foreign population. The idea of becoming subject to the Turkish laws and perhaps being thrown into Turkish prisons made their flesh creep—and with good reason.

About this time I had a long conference with Enver. He asked me to call at his residence, as he was laid up with an infected toe, the result of a surgical operation. I thus had an illuminating glimpse of the minister of war in his home. Certainly this humble man of the people had risen in the world. His house, which was in one of the quietest and most aristocratic parts of the city, was a splendid old building, very large and very elaborate. I was ushered through a series of four or five halls, and as I went by one door the imperial princess, Enver's wife, slightly opened it and peered through at me. Further on another Turkish lady opened her door and obtained a fleeting glimpse of the ambassadorial figure. I was finally escorted into a beautiful room in which Enver lay reclining on a sofa. He had on a long silk dressing gown and his stockings feet hung languidly over the edge of the divan. He looked much younger than in his uniform; he was an extremely neat and well-groomed object, with a pale, smooth face, made even more striking by his black hair, and with delicate white hands, and long, tapering fingers. He might easily have passed for under thirty, and, in fact, he was not much over that age. He had at hand a violin, and a piano near by also testified to his musical taste. The room was splendidly tapestried; perhaps its most conspicuous feature was a dais upon which stood a golden chair; this was the marriage throne of Enver's imperial wife. As I glanced around at all this luxury, I must admit that a few uncharitable thoughts came to mind, and that I could not help forming a question which was then being generally asked in Constantinople. Where did Enver get the money for this expensive establishment? He had no fortune of his own—his parents had been wretchedly poor. His salary as a cabinet minister was only about \$5,000. His wife had a moderate allowance as an imperial princess, but she had no private resources. Enver had never engaged in business, he had been a devoted military officer, and politician all his life. But here he was living at a rate that demanded a very large income. In other ways Enver was giving evidences of great and sudden prosperity and already he had heard much of his investments in real estate, which were the talk of the town.

Enver wished to discuss the capitulations. He practically said that the cabinet had decided on the abrogation, and he wished to know the attitude of the United States. He added that certainly a country which had fought for its independence as we had would sympathize with Turkey's attempt to shake off these shackles. We had helped Japan free herself from similar burdens and wouldn't we now help Turkey? Certainly Turkey was a civilized nation, wasn't it? I answered that I thought that the United States might consent to abrogate the capitulations in so far as they were economic. It was my opinion that Turkey should control her customs duties and be permitted to levy the same rates on foreigners as on her own citizens. So long as the Turkish courts and Turkish prisons maintained their present standards, however, we could never agree to give up the judicial capitulations. Turkey should reform the abuses of her courts, then, and after that we might discuss the matter of abrogation. Enver replied that Turkey would be willing to have mixed tribunals and to have the United States designate some of the judges, but I suggested that now the American judges did not know the Turkish language or Turkish law, his scheme involved great practical difficulties. I also told him that the American schools and colleges were very dear to Americans, and that we would never consent to subjecting them to Turkish jurisdiction.

Despite the protests of all the ambassadors, the cabinet issued its notification that the capitulations would be abrogated on October 1. This abrogation was all a part of the Young Turks' plan to free themselves from foreign tutelage and to create a new country on the basis of "Turkey for the Turks." It represented, as I shall show, what was the central point of Turkish policy, not only in the empire's relations to foreign powers, but to her subject people. The question on this question was about the same as our own; the British government would consent to the modification of the economic restrictions, but not the others. Wangenheim was greatly disturbed, and I think that his foreign office reprimanded him for letting the abrogation take place, because he blandly asked me to announce that I was the responsible person! As October 1 approached, the foreigners in Turkey were in a high state of apprehension. The Dardanelles had been closed, shutting them off from Europe; and now they felt that they were to be left to the mercy of Turkish courts and Turkish prisons. Inasmuch as it was the habit in Turkish prisons to herd the innocent with the guilty, and to place in the same room with murderers people who had been charged, but not convicted of minor offenses, and to bastinado recalcitrant witnesses, the fears of the foreign residents may well be imagined. The educational institutions were also apprehensive, and in their interest I now appear to Enver. He assured me that the Turks had no hostile intention toward Americans. I replied that he should show in unmistakable fashion that Americans would not be harmed.

"All right," he answered. "What would you suggest?" "Why not occasionally visit Robert College on October 1, when the capitulations are abrogated?" I said. The idea was rather a unique one, for in all the history of this institution an important Turkish official had

never entered its doors. But I knew enough of the Turkish character to understand that an open, ceremonious visit by Enver would cause a public sensation. News of it would reach the farthest limits of the Turkish empire, and it was certain that the Turks would interpret it as meaning that one of the two most powerful men in the world, the president of the other American institutions under his patronage. Such a visit would exercise a greater protective influence over American colleges and schools in Turkey than an army corps. I was therefore greatly pleased when Enver promptly adopted my suggestion.

On the day that the capitulations were abrogated, Enver appeared at the American embassy with two autos, one for himself and me, and the other for his adjutants, all of whom were dressed in full uniform. I was pleased when Enver had made the proceeding so spectacular for I wished it to have the widest publicity. On the ride up to the college I told Enver all about these American institutions and what they were doing for Turkey. He realized that the Turkish people, like most Turks, he half suspected that they concealed a political purpose.

"We Americans are not looking for material advantages in Turkey," I said. "We merely demand that you treat kindly our children, these children Enver had made the people of the United States have the warmest affection."

I told him that Mr. Cleveland H. Dodge, president of the trustees of Robert College, and Mr. Charles R. Crane, president of the trustees of the Women's College, were intimate friends of Enver's. I said, "I added, 'represent what is best in America and the fine altruistic spirit which in our country accumulates wealth and then uses it to found colleges and schools. In establishing these institutions Turkey is trying, not to convert your people to Christianity, but to help train them in the sciences and arts and so prepare to make them better citizens. Americans feel that the Bible lands have given their people a religion, and they wish to repay with the best thing America has—its education.' I then told him about Mrs. Russell Sage and Miss Helen Gould, who had made large gifts to the Women's College."

"But where do these people get all the money for such benefactions?" Enver asked. I then entertained him for an hour or so with a few pages from our own "American Nights." I told him how Jay Gould had arrived in New York, a penniless and ragged boy, with a mousetrap which he had invented and how he had died, almost 30 years ago, leaving a fortune of about \$100,000,000. I told him how Commodore Vanderbilt had started life as a ferryman and had become America's greatest railroad "magnate;" how Rockefeller had begun his career sitting on a high stool in a Cleveland commission house, earning \$4 a week, and had created the greatest fortune that had ever been accumulated by a single man in the world's history. I told him how the Dodges had become our great "copper" kings and how their great iron manufacturing empire of iron pipe. Enver found these stories more thrilling than any that had ever come out of Baghdad, and I found afterward that he had retold them so frequently that they had reached almost all important people in Constantinople.

Enver was immensely impressed also by what I said about the American institutions. He went through all the buildings and expressed his enthusiasm at everything he saw, and he even suggested that he would like to have his brother-in-law, the late tea with Mrs. Gates, wife of President Gates, discussed most intelligently the courses, and asked if we could not introduce the study of agriculture. The teachers he met seemed to be a great revelation. "I expected to find these missionaries as they are pictured in the Berlin newspapers," he said, "with long hair and hanging jaws, and hands clasped constantly in a prayerful attitude. But here is Dr. Gates, talking Turkish and acting like a man of the world. I am more than pleased, and thank you for bringing me."

We all saw Enver that afternoon in his most delightful aspect. My idea that his visit to Turkey would protect the colleges from disturbance proved to have been a happy one. The Turkish empire has been a tumultuous place in the last four years, but the American colleges have had no difficulties, either with the Turkish government or with the Turkish population.

This visit was only an agreeable interlude in events of the most exciting character. Enver, amiable as he could be on occasion, had deliberately determined to put Turkey in the war with Germany. Germany had now reached the point where she no longer concealed her intentions. Once before, when I had interfered in the interest of peace, Wangenheim had encouraged my action. The reason, as I have said, was that American neutrality toward Germany had wished Turkey to keep out of the war, for the German general staff expected to win without her help. But now Wangenheim wanted Turkey in. As I was not working in Germany's interest, but as I was anxious to protect American institutions, I still kept urging Enver and Talaat to keep out. This made Wangenheim angry. "I thought that you were a neutral!" he now exclaimed.

"I thought that you were—in Turkey," I answered. "Toward the end of October, Wangenheim was leaving nothing undone to start hostilities, all he needed now was a favorable occasion. Even after Germany had closed the Dardanelles, the German ambassador's task was not an easy one. The last was not yet entirely convinced that his best policy was war, and, as I have already said, there was still plenty of pro-ally sympathy in official quarters. It was Talaat's plan not to seize the cabinet office at once, but gradually to allow his way into undisputed control. At this crisis the most popularly respected members of the ministry were Djavid, the minister of finance, a man who was Jewish by race, but Mohammedan in religion; Mahmoud Fokha, minister of public works, a Circassian, Pushtany Effendi, minister of commerce and agriculture, a Christian Arab, and Oskan Effendi, minister of posts and telegraphs, an Armenian—and a Christian, of course. All these leaders, as well as the grand vizier, openly opposed war and all now informed Talaat and Enver that they would resign if Germany succeeded in her intrigues. Thus the atmosphere was exciting; how tense the situation was still is shown by the fact that Sir Mallet, the British ambassador, had accepted an invitation to dine at the American embassy on October 20, but he sent word at the last moment that he was ill and could not come. I was anxious to protect American institutions, and two afterward found him in my garden, apparently in the best of health. Sir Louis smiled and said that his illness had been purely political. He had received a letter telling him that he was to be assassinated that evening; this letter informed

him of the precise spot where the tragedy was to take place, and he thought he thought that he had better stay indoors. As I had no doubt that some such crime had been planned, I offered Sir Louis the protection of our embassy. I gave him the key to the back gate of the garden, and with Lord Wellington, one of the Duke of Wellington's secretaries—I made all arrangements for his escape to our quarters in case a flight became necessary. Our two gossamers were so located that, in the event of an attack, he might go undetected from the back gate of his to the back gate of ours. "These people are relapsing into the middle ages," said Sir Louis. "When it was quite the thing to throw ambassadors into dungeons," and I think that he anticipated that the present Turks might treat him in the same way. I at once went to the grand vizier and informed him of the situation, insisting that nothing less than a visit from Talaat to Sir Louis, assuring him of his safety, would undo the harm already done. I could make this demand with propriety, as we had already made arrangements to take over British interests when the break came. Without two hours Talaat made such a visit. Though one of the Turkish newspapers was printing scurrilous attacks on Sir Louis he was personally very popular with the Turks, and the grand vizier expressed his amazement and regret—and he was entirely sincere—that such threats had been made. (To be continued.)

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Children Cry FOR FLETCHER'S CASTORIA

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