

AMBASSADOR WANGENHEIM'S STORY

By Henry C. Morgenthau

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remark that she was holding a little court at the German embassy. The Germans, however, were about the only people who were enjoying the 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 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 for these latest requisitions. Afterward many who understood officialdom, and were politically influential, did recover to the extent of seventy per cent.—what became of the remaining thirty 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 reformed 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 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 pillaging 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 twenty-five cents a month, and gave the families a separate allowance of \$1.50 a month. As the 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 denuded in this way. But suffering 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 had logical reasons for which any Ottoman could obtain exemption from the payment of all \$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 way. I have a photographic copy of such a requisition made by Humann, the German naval attaché, for a shipment of oil cake. This document is dated September 29, 1914. "The lot by the merchant, Dersting, which was mentioned in your letter of the twenty-sixth," 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.

CHAPTER V.

Wangenheim Smuggles the "Goeben" and the "Breslau" Through the Dardanelles.

On August 10, I went out on a little launch to meet the *Stollia*, a small motor launch which had arrived from Venice. I was especially interested in this vessel because she was bringing to Constantinople my son-in-law and daughter, Mr. and Mrs. Maurice Wertheim, and their three little daughters. The *Stollia* was even more interesting than I had expected. I found the passengers considerably excited, for they had witnessed, the day before, a naval engagement in the Ionian sea. They were lunching yesterday on deck, my daughter told me, "when I saw two strange-looking vessels just above the horizon. I ran for the glasses and made out two large battleships, the first one with two queer funnels, the second one with one quite an ordinary-looking battleship. We watched and saw another ship coming up behind them and going very fast. She came nearer and nearer and then we heard guns booming. Every minute or so there was a puff of white smoke. It took me some time to realize what it was all about, and then it burst upon me that we were actually witnessing an engagement. The British were on the left, and the German ships were on the right. The two big ones turned and rushed furiously for the little one, and then apparently they changed their minds and turned back. Then the little one, the British, was calmly steamed in our direction. At first I was somewhat alarmed at this, but nothing happened. She circled around us with her tars excited and grinning and somewhat grimy. They signalled, but we made no reply, and then turned and finally disappeared. The captain told us that the two big ships were Germans which had been caught in the Mediterranean and which were trying to escape from the British. He said that the British ships are chasing them all over the Mediterranean, and that the German ships are trying to get into Constantinople. Have you seen anything of them? Where do you suppose the British are?"

"We've got them!" he shouted to me. "Got what?" I asked. "The Goeben and the Breslau have passed through the Dardanelles!" He was waving the wireless message with all the enthusiasm of a college boy whose football team has won a victory.

Then, momentarily checking his enthusiasm, he came up to me solemnly, humorously shook his forehead, lifted his eyebrows and said, "Of course, you understand that we have sold those ships to Turkey!" "And Admiral Souchon," he added with another wink, "will enter the sultan's service!"

Wangenheim had more than patriotic reasons for this exultation; the arrival of these ships was the greatest day in his diplomatic career. It was really his first diplomatic victory which Germany had won. For years the chancellorship of the empire had been Wangenheim's laudable ambition, and he behaved now like a man who saw his prize within his grasp. The voyage of the Goeben and the Breslau was his personal triumph; he had arranged with the Turkish cabinet for their passage through the Dardanelles, and he had directed their movements by wireless in the Mediterranean. By safely getting the Goeben and the Breslau into Constantinople, Wangenheim had definitely clinched Turkey as Germany's ally. All his intrigues and plottings for three years had now finally succeeded.

I doubt if any two ships have exercised a greater influence upon history than these two German cruisers. Few of us at that time realized their great importance, but subsequent developments have fully justified Wangenheim's exuberant satisfaction. The Goeben was a powerful battle cruiser of recent construction; the Breslau was not so large a ship, but she, like the Goeben, had the excessive speed that made her extremely serviceable in those waters. These ships had spent the few months preceding the war cruising in the Mediterranean, and when the declaration finally came they were taking on supplies at Messina. I have always regarded it as more than coincidence that these two vessels, both of them having a greater speed than any French or English ships in the Mediterranean, should have been lying not far from Turkey when war broke out. The selection of the Goeben was particularly fortunate, as she had twice before visited Constantinople and her officers and men knew the Dardanelles perfectly. The behavior of these crews, when the news of war was received, indicated the spirit with which the Goeben was to proceed. The British admiral upon their shoulders, and held a German jollification. It is said that Admiral Souchon preserved, as a touching souvenir of this occasion, his white uniform bearing the finger prints of his grimy sailors!

For all their joy at the prospect of battle, the situation of these ships was still a precarious one. They formed no match for the large British and French naval forces which were roaming through the Mediterranean. The Goeben and the Breslau were far from their native bases; with the coaling problem such an acute one, and with England in possession of all important stations, where could they hope for safety? Several Italian destroyers were circling around the German ships at Messina, enforcing

neutrality and occasionally reminding them that they could remain in port only twenty-four hours. England had ships stationed at the Gulf of Otranto, the head of the Adriatic, to cut them off in case they sought to escape into the Austrian port of Pola. The British navy also stood guard at Gibraltar and Brest, the only other exits that apparently offered the possibility of escape. There was only one other place in which the Goeben and the Breslau might find a safe and friendly reception. That was Constantinople. Apparently the British navy dismissed this as an impossibility. At that time, early in August, international law had not entirely disappeared as the guiding conduct of nations. Turkey was then a neutral country, and, despite the masterful evidences of German domination, she seemed likely to maintain her neutrality. The treaty of Paris, which was signed in 1856, as well as the treaty of London, signed in 1871, provided that warships should not use the Dardanelles except by the special permission of the sultan, which could be granted only in times of peace. In practice the government had seldom given this permission except for ceremonial occasions. Under the existing conditions it would have amounted virtually to an unfriendly act for the sultan to have removed the ban against war vessels in the Dardanelles, and to permit the Goeben and the Breslau to pass through the straits for more than twenty-four hours would have been nothing less than a declaration of war. It is perhaps not surprising that the British, in the early days of August, 1914, when Germany had not completely made clear her official opinion that international law had ceased to exist, regarded these treaty stipulations as barring the German ships from the Dardanelles and Constantinople. Relying upon the sanctity of these international regulations, the British navy had shut off every point through which these German ships could have escaped to safety—except the entrance to the Dardanelles. Had England, immediately on the declaration of war, rushed a powerful squadron to this vital spot, how different the history of the last three years might have been!

"His majesty expects the Goeben and the Breslau to succeed in breaking through!" Such was the wireless that reached these vessels at Messina at 5 o'clock on the evening of August 4th. The twenty-four hours' stay permitted by the Italian government had nearly expired. Outside, in the Strait of Otranto lay the force of British battle cruisers, sending false radio messages to the Germans, instructing them to rush for Pola. With bands playing and flags flying, the officers and crews having had their spirits fired by oratory and drink, the two vessels started at full speed toward the awaiting British fleet. The little Gloucester, a scout boat, kept in touch, wiring constantly the German movements to the main squadron. Suddenly, when off Cape Spartivento, the Goeben and the Breslau let off into the atmosphere all the discordant vibrations which their wireless could command, jamming the air with such a hullabaloo that the Gloucester was unable to send any intelligible messages. Then the German cruisers turned south and made for the Aegean sea. The plucky little Gloucester kept close on their heels, and, as my daughter had related, had

even once audaciously offered battle. A few hours behind the British squadron pursued, but uselessly, for the German ships, though far less powerful than the British, were much speedier. Even then the British admiral probably thought that he had spoiled the German plans. The German ships might get first to the Dardanelles, but at that point stood international law across the path, barring the entrance. Meanwhile Wangenheim had accomplished his great diplomatic success. From the Corcovado wireless station in the Hosphorus he was sending the most agreeable news to Admiral Souchon. He was telling him to "oust the Turkish flag when he reached the strait, for Admiral Souchon's cruisers had suddenly become parts of the Turkish navy, and, therefore, the usual international prohibitions did not apply. These cruisers were no longer the Goeben and the Breslau, for, like an oriental magician, Wangenheim had suddenly changed them into the Sultan Selim and the Medidit. The fact was that the German ambassador had cleverly taken advantage of the existing situation to manufacture a "sale." As I have already told, Turkey had two dreadnaughts under construction in England, when the war broke out. These ships were not exclusively governmental enterprises; their purchase represented what, on the surface, appeared to be a popular enthusiasm of the Turkish people. They were to be a gesture through which Turkey was to attack Greece and win back the islands of the Aegean, and the Turkish people had raised the money to build them by so-called popular subscription. Agents had gone from house to house, painfully collecting these small sums of money; there had been entertainments and fairs, and, in their eagerness for the cause, Turkish women had sold their hair for the benefit of the common fund. These two vessels thus represented a spectacular outburst of patriotism that was unusual in Turkey, so unusual, indeed, that many detected signs that the government had stimulated it. At the very moment when the war began, Turkey had made her last payment to the English shipyards and the Turkish crews had arrived in England prepared to take the finished vessels home. Then, a few days before the time set to deliver them, the British government stepped in and commandeered these dreadnaughts for the British navy.

There is not the slightest question that England had not only a legal, but a moral right to do this; there is also no question that her action was a proper one, and that, had she been dealing with almost any other nation, such a proceeding would not have aroused any resentment. But the Turkish people cared nothing for distinctions of this sort; all they saw was that they had two ships in England, which they had greatly strained their resources to purchase, and that England had now stepped in and taken them. Even without external pressure they would have resented the act, but external pressure was exerted in plenty. The transaction gave Wangenheim the greatest opportunity of his life. Violent attacks upon England, all emanating from the German embassy, began to fill the Turkish press. Wangenheim was constantly discouraging to the Turkish leaders on English perfidy and he suggested that Germany, Turkey

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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 pacifist 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 helplessness and misery. Day by day the miscellaneous Ottoman hordes passed through the streets, Arabesque, Soudanese and shoeless, dressed in their most gaily colored 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 dawning 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 Talat, 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 Roumania, and the skilled mechanics industriously working from daybreak to sun-

set, were unmistakably German. 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 by the Eiffel Tower in Paris! He said that it would put him in constant communication with Berlin. So little did he attempt to conceal his 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 Laffert 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 Golts Pasha. He was constantly making a kind of viceregal progress through the streets in a huge and madly dashing automobile, on both sides of which flaring German eagles were painted. A trumpet on the front seat would blow loud, defiant blasts as the conveyance rumbled along, and was 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



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At first I was somewhat alarmed at this, but nothing happened. She circled around us with her tars excited and grinning and somewhat grimy. They signalled, but we made no reply, and then turned and finally disappeared. The captain told us that the two big ships were Germans which had been caught in the Mediterranean and which were trying to escape from the British. He said that the British ships are chasing them all over the Mediterranean, and that the German ships are trying to get into Constantinople. Have you seen anything of them? Where do you suppose the British are?"



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