

KEMAL'S TURKEY

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A Bit of History.

THE blood-red flame of the World War flickered and went out. In the black of night, in a lightless gloom so oppressive that it looked as if there might never be a resurrection of broken hopes, the Ottoman Empire, along with Germany, Austria, and Russia, bowed down in defeat.

The victorious Allies then proceeded to draw up the Treaty of Sèvres, named after a beautiful town just outside of Paris on the way to Versailles. It provided, among other things, for the dismemberment of the defeated Empire. The west and northwest were to become Greek; the east and south, Armenian; while the rest of the country was to be cut up and divided among England, France, and Italy. This partitioning was to be accomplished through coercion, with acquisitive Greece as the spear-head. Her longing eyes were already fastened upon her eastern paper empire. The Greeks would land their troops on the western shores of Anatolia, and complete the job for themselves and the other powers. For Great Britain, France, and Italy were weary of war. They wished to send no more troops to meet an inglorious death in the East, and hesitated to appropriate more money to be sunk in the bottomless pit of an Anatolian campaign. Protected by Allied fleets, the Greek forces were landed in Smyrna on May 15, 1919. The bloody struggle began. However, there was resistance from the very beginning, for the Greeks had underestimated the power of even the war-weary Turk, now roused to anger, and spurred on by the spirit of a patriotic nationalism.

The day following the Greek occupation, a solitary figure left Constantinople, now called Istamboul,—a figure destined to change the course of Turkish history. It was Mustapha Kemal Pasha, leaving on State business. With a mandate from the Sultan, he was heading for the eastern provinces of Anatolia where he was to be Inspector-General of the Turkish troops, with full power to assist in pacifying a much distressed population. Secretly opposed to the Sultan, he immediately made contacts with the leaders of the interior who were, like him, anxious to save their country from partition and vassalage in accordance with the Treaty of Sèvres.

Mustapha Kemal Pasha faced a task of huge proportions. The Turkish population, to whom news came with exasperating slowness, had to be thoroughly acquainted with the seriousness of the crisis. New recruits had to be brought into service, trained, and equipped. A revolutionary spirit had to be fanned from a tiny blaze to a conflagration. Kemal himself has said: "People had to be persuaded to rebel against the Ottoman régime, against the Ottoman Sultan, against the Caliph, and against everything Mohammedan. The whole Turkish army had to be won over to the idea of revolution." To complicate the situation, the government at Constantinople was attempting to nullify his efforts by recalling governors who favoured the Nationalist movement, and by arresting Nationalist leaders wherever they could be found. Furthermore, threats came from Great Britain and France that they would enter the country and bring resistance to an end. If a new nation was to be born, the trying days and the stubborn problems needed extraordinary faith and courage.

In spite of the opposition of those who believed that the case of Turkey was hopeless, or who believed that an American mandate would be a happy solution, Mustapha Kemal Pasha was chosen the head of the revolutionary movement. Specifically, he was made President of the Executive Committee which had been brought into existence by an Assembly at Sivas. His Committee met at Angora in the performance of its functions, where in the course of time a general governmental organization came into being. While Kemal and his revolutionary-minded lieutenants were being denounced from Constantinople, a National Assembly, composed in part of deputies who had escaped from that city and in part of those appointed on the spot, met at the new government centre of Angora. It was here that a break was made with the Sultan's government, and the Nationalist régime was established.

The Graeco-Turkish war was still raging in western Anatolia. It continued until the battle of Sakharia, where the Turks on a river of that name gained a smashing victory under the personal command of Mustapha Kemal himself. An armistice at Mudania in October, 1922, formed the climax of the rout of the Greeks. Looking back, one can see that the ink on the Treaty of Sèvres was not much more than dry when it became apparent that the Treaty was destined for the waste basket. The Allied powers were sick of war; and war seemed to be the only force to combat the growing strength of Turkish Nationalism.

A Peace Conference of Lausanne in 1922, where the torn pieces of the Treaty of Sèvres were discarded, was called to deal

with the new situation. Delegates were invited from both the Constantinople and the Angora governments. But the former was only a shadow, lacking in respect and power. It could be no longer supported, for it had combined with the Allies to force the Turkish people to accept the still-born Treaty of Sèvres.

Clearing Away the Debris.

The Sublime Porte, so named because justice was anciently administered at the high gate (*porte*) of the Sultan's palace, was the logical target of the Kemalist government after the brilliant victory in the Graeco-Turkish war. The Porte no longer could boast of authority, and lacked the qualities of vital leadership. On November 1, 1922, the National Assembly abolished the Sultanate by the use of language which left no misunderstanding.

The Capitulations were also marked for abolition. Named from the Low-Latin *capitulum*, indicating the chapter-form in which the acts were set down, these were agreements granting to foreign residents extra-territorial jurisdiction in Turkey. The first Capitulation was concluded with France in 1535 during the reign of Sul-eiman "the Magnificent." Privileges were granted to other nations until the eighteenth century saw nearly every European power included, while in the nineteenth the United States, Greece and Belgium had been added to the growing list. Judicial and commercial advantages had been granted to foreign individuals, groups of individuals, and corporations resident within Turkish territory.

These privileges were perhaps logical enough in those days when they were first granted. Western trade was small, and western influence was weak in comparison with the trade and influence of the Ottoman Empire. But as Turkey lost power and prestige, the Capitulations became levers with which to pry loose greater rights, even to the extent of making intolerable inroads upon her dwindling sovereignty. "The system of the Capitulations," say Toynbee and Kirkwood in their book, *Turkey*, "had become so discredited by abuses, so onerous to the Turks by its immunities and unequal privileges, so uneconomic from the standpoint of Turkish prosperity and of native industrial and commercial progress, and so anomalous in a state which had attained to some degree of westernized nationhood, that their (*sic*) abolition had become only a matter of time. The West itself recognized this fact, and before the Great War the Powers had begun to contemplate consenting to the abrogation of their Capitulatory rights for a consideration."

Turkey's resistance began with the Great War. One of her first and most important acts was to announce that she no longer recognized the old agreements. At the close of the war she again showed her defiance of the Treaty of Sèvres, which contained a provision for the restoration of the system. At the first Lausanne peace conference the Turks indicated that they would fight rather than make a surrender. But a dead-lock resulted, owing to the equal insistence on the part of the Allied Powers. The Turks came to the second Lausanne conference five months later with a new insistence, backed by their powerful leader, Mustapha Kemal Pasha. In a spirited contest, victory went to the Turkish delegates. Turkish Nationalism was on the road to greater expansion.

Not only had the Ottoman Empire surrendered large fractions of its sovereignty in the form of Capitulations, but it was, in addition, far from homogeneous. It contained large non-Moslem populations organized into communities or millets. Included in these alien populations were, for example, Ionian Greeks who had preceded the Turks to the coast of Asia Minor by twenty centuries, and Byzantine Christians who had not been amalgamated by the Turkish new-comers. These communities, dating back to 1453, were ruled by an ecclesiastic who possessed both civil and religious authority, and who was accredited to the Sublime Porte. The community over which he exercised control was in the possession of very substantial rights and privileges. For example, there was practical immunity from Turkish laws, absolute religious freedom, the unrestricted control of education, and autonomy in the management of local affairs.

This system of giving autonomous control to alien communities was originally designed to simplify the burden of the Sultan's government. But in the course of time it became a serious obstacle to national progress. Instead of dispatch and harmony, which were expected, there were bitter rivalries and open antagonisms. And as if this were not enough, there were secret understandings with foreign countries in derogation of the rights of the Ottoman Empire. Before the Revolution of 1908 there was a movement for the abolition of this pernicious system. It took the power of the Republican régime, directed and energized by Mustapha Kemal Pasha, to effect results. The matter was presented at the Lausanne Conference, and it was there that the ancient anomaly was cleared away.

One thing more of great importance remained to be done. Turkey, prior to 1920, contained Greeks and Armenians who neither politically nor religiously could fit into a programme of

intensive nationalization. In other words, new Turkey was troubled with the problem of minorities. An exchange of nationals between Greece and Turkey, although a problem of mammoth proportions, would make for homogeneity and solidarity. The proposal was made at the Lausanne Conference and accepted by the Turks, the latter not unmindful of the difficulties involved. Izmet Pasha, leader of the Turkish delegation, expressed himself in this way: "We would rather have our own house, bare and unfurnished, than any house, however elegant, which we must share with others."

Accordingly, there was signed at Lausanne a document entitled, "A Convention concerning the exchange of Greek and Turkish populations," one of the most extraordinary agreements in the history of the world, and giving rise to the greatest trek known to man.

Although most of the Greek minorities in Turkey had fled or had been deported before the Convention was signed, the compulsory exchange began in earnest. Herdsmen from Greece were sent to the plateaus of Anatolia, silk growers to Brusa and its environs, and tobacco planters to the regions about Samsun. While this may sound like a romantic environmental readjustment of a people, it was anything but a glorious adventure for those who participated. Old associations shattered by the colossal uprooting of a humanity, thousands upon thousands hurried out of Greece for an unknown destination in an unfamiliar land, to find upon arrival only war-devastated regions, thousands and tens of thousands dying from malaria and exposure, hordes harried by drought, hunger, disease and discouragement—the tragedies cannot be divorced from the great appeal that such a solution made to those in authority in the two countries involved.

Such was the preparation for a new government and a new leadership.

The Government and its Leadership.

The Constitution of the Republic of Turkey, as adopted in 1924, is a comparatively simple document, modelled along western parliamentary lines, providing for an elective unicameral Grand National Assembly in which are vested executive, legislative and judicial powers. The Assembly is elected by vote of all citizens above a certain age. That it may not become a military group, making possible a military *coup d'état*, a constitutional provision prohibits anyone from being both a deputy and an army officer

at the same time. Cabinet members are chosen from the Assembly, to which they are individually and collectively responsible. The Prime Minister is designated by the President of the Republic, who in turn selects the other cabinet members.

In view of the fact that the President has assumed dictatorial powers, the constitutional provisions dealing with his powers and their history are of unusual interest. He is elected by the Assembly, with a term of office lasting only during its life, which is four years, thus giving him no advantage through its arbitrary dissolution. The first draft of the Constitution provided for an eight-year term. He has a veto which may be overridden by a majority vote of the Assembly. Here again the original draft provided that his veto could be nullified only by a two-thirds vote.

The first sentence of the Constitution declares the Turkish State to be a republic. As if to ward off the possibility of an attempted restoration of monarchy, another provision states that "No proposal to alter the article specifying that the form of government is a republic shall be entertained." Thus republicanism would be given the seal of permanency.

The seat of government is at Angora. In those desperate, revolutionary days of the early twenties, it was clothed in ennui, with a lethargic noonday silence broken only by the occasional flapping wings of storks as they shifted their position from roof to roof in a feeble attempt to vary the monotony of their existence. The place was comfortless, primitive, odorous, and dusty—with five thousand dusty people, with dusty houses, and with dusty trees, the latter looking as if they had been carved from zinc. It was, indeed, the negation of splendour, the antithesis of vibrant activity.

Old Angora nestles about a medieval hill. A new Angora, now numbering nearly a hundred thousand people, and containing a residential district and governmental offices, has been built upon an adjoining plain which was formerly a mosquito-infested swamp. Seventy-five million dollars have been spent on buildings, roads, and parks; and among the old-style Turkish houses are the new-style German-and-Austrian-designed concrete structures; among expensive villas are peasant cottages. A most serious attempt at beautification has been ventured by setting out millions of trees and shrubs.

At the junction of the old and new Angora has been placed a huge equestrian statue of Mustapha Kemal Pasha, expressive of the new régime. There is meaning in the presence of the statue itself, for a superstitious Moslem rule tabooed all statues before

the iconoclastic onslaughts of the new President. An observer is also aware of another potent fact: Kemal, astride his horse, faces not southeast to Mecca, but to the West.

Although lacking in beauty, housing facilities and sanitation in 1922, there were reasons why Angora was chosen as the capital. As between Constantinople and Angora, the former was the home of the old government, while the latter was safe for the revolutionist group, and still not too far away. Angora, too, in comparison with Sivas or Erzerum, those other cradles of the Nationalist movement, offered better rail and telegraphic communication with Constantinople. Furthermore, being near the centre of the country, it was in a preferred geographical position.

In Angora lives a dynamic President, who would breathe into his new country the vigour and mentality of the West, still keeping the Asiatic body, in accordance with his creed, "We will be modern and Turkish."

His name and titles bristle with success and heroic accomplishment. When the yellow-haired, blue-eyed Salonican lad, Mustapha, showed unusual intelligence in mathematics, his instructor in that subject, whose name was also Mustapha, called him "Kemal," meaning "the Perfect." In August, 1915, with the Great War on, General Liman von Sanders, the German Commander at Gallipoli, at his wits' end, summoned Kemal to his tent, and announced that he could do no more with the "damned Turks." With skepticism rampant, Kemal was put in charge of 160,000 Turkish soldiers. At Adana a shell-fragment struck him down. But he got up and calmly took from his breast a shattered watch. The Turkish soldiers were with him, to a man. Allah had protected him, they said. Important, that, for in the Moslem world Allah determines everything! With Gallipoli evacuated by the British, he went to the Caucasus front where he saved Bitlis and Moush from the Russians. For this leadership and courage he received the rank of Pasha. In the Graeco-Turkish war, Mustapha Kemal Pasha was the generalissimo. During the twenty-two day battle of Sakharia his horse was wounded, and he suffered a broken rib. But, as if made of iron, he did not leave the front. For his exceptional conduct the National Assembly bestowed upon him the "tradition-hung" title of "Gazi," meaning "The Conqueror." Failure has not known him. Nor will failure know his country if he can help it. He likes to quote the philosophy of the poet, Namuth Kemal Bey: "This nation cannot die. If the impossible should come to pass that she should die, the earth itself could not sustain the weight of her casket."

Kemal Statecraft.

The practical philosophy underlying the new Turkish Nationalism is presented in an illuminating manner by Abel Adam in *The Book of Mustapha Kemal*. A comparison, first of all, of the East and the West is arresting. "The mentality of Europe," he writes, "is the mentality of this world," while, on the other hand, "the mentality of Asia is the mentality of the next world." The West lives, "whereas the East represents a series of nations whose rights to live have not been recognized." The author observes that there can be no compromise between the Eastern and the Western points of view, and comes to the conclusion that "the West represents the happiest life, the strongest state organization, the truest human life." There is a way out. "Salvation can be secured only by the vaccine of European mentality."

This philosophy has been translated into action in the abolition of the Caliphate. Historically, the Caliph was the temporal and spiritual head of Islam. On that November day in 1922 when the Sultanate was abolished, the Caliphate was given a thorough inspection. It was allowed to exist, but made elective, and permitted to exercise only "spiritual" functions. The position was given to Abdul Mejid, a charming, intellectually-inclined prince of the House of Osman, second son of a former sultan, Abdul Aziz. However, sixteen months later the Caliphate was again considered by the Grand National Assembly. This time it was abolished *in toto*. With pure Stalinistic iconoclasm, Mustapha Kemal recommended the demolition of a system which had, he said, "sucked us white for centuries." The agreeable Caliph was one midnight unceremoniously bundled off into exile.

With the abolition of the Caliphate went the disestablishment of the Islamic Church. The *Sheriat*, or Holy Law, was nullified; religious courts were put under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Justice; education was secularized, and mosque schools turned over to the control of the Minister of Education; the Sheik-ul-Islam, *ipso facto* a member of the Cabinet under the old régime, and the chief expounder of the Holy Law, was dropped; the *Ministry of Pious Foundations* was abolished, and the huge endowments under its jurisdiction, designed for charity and education, were administered by the government; religious orders, with the economic drain upon the country, were suppressed; and the clause, "Islam is the religion of the State," was eliminated from the Constitution. Nor does this mean that the leaders of the new republic think religion is unnecessary. It means that religion will have a more spiritual significance in the life of the Turkish people.

The new Turkish philosophy, again, finds expression in a revised status of women, based upon that prevailing in the West. The movement toward the social, legal, and economic emancipation of women had its origin in the Revolution of 1908. It was promoted by the Great War, and has reached a point of significance under the Republic. In 1916 the University of Istanbul opened its class-rooms to women; and Khalideh Khanum, the first Turkish woman to be honoured with a university degree, has dignified the woman's educational movement by becoming a distinguished writer and powerful factor in the field of social activity. In the same year, under the régime of the Young Turks, a revised family law was passed, directed at the two weak spots of the old system, polygamy and divorce. While it was abrogated by the reestablishment of the Sultan's government, upon the fall of this government the question arose whether there should be a re-adoption of this law or the importation of a Western code. The family laws of western States were studied by a committee of women from the Nationalist Club, with the result that a petition was submitted to the Grand National Assembly with a recommendation that the laws of Sweden be adopted. While no immediate action was taken, agitation did not cease. Finally, the Swiss family code was enacted, giving to the Turks a strictly Western family ideal. Polygamy, which the Koran permitted, was abolished; and divorce was made possible for the wife and more difficult for the husband.

Concurrent with the movement to improve the status of family life was the effort to abolish the veil, the symbol of woman's legal bondage, and a superstitious relic of an ultra-puritanical doctrine that no man except a husband or a close relative could look without sin upon a woman's face. In the words of Mustapha Kemal, "the whole social outlook was paralyzed by the etiquette of the harem." It is true that in the revolutionary days of 1908 the movement was started; but it was not until an impetus was given by the Kemal republic that the reform gained momentum. However, under the Republic the women are not required to discard the veil, but have permission to choose their head-dress. As a matter of fact, a large majority have surrendered their veils, not for hats, which are expensive and considered ugly, but for the charshaf, which has been described as a black "madonna-like coif."

In the social relationship existing between men and women, Mustapha Kemal has by his own example pointed the way. He was married in a Western manner, the bride, unveiled, taking a part in the wedding ceremony. After the marriage she accompanied him everywhere. Giving a dance to the élite of Smyrna,

he took the lead with the daughter of the Governor; and during the course of the dance he ordered the young officers who stood about the doorways to find their partners. Employing the service of the Turk-Ojac, a cultural organization dating from the Revolution of 1908, he had companies of players sent from place to place to disseminate his new social ideas, the women who attended these performances finding that they were sitting by the side of men.

Needless to say, no mere dictatorial, non-obligatory fiat to discard the veil and no projected reform synchronized to ball-room rhythm could change abruptly the direction of the social stream. But the ruler of Turkey was in no mood to tolerate designed opposition. When the editor of the *Ascham* published a cartoon in which woman's freedom was represented as a balloon, which upon ascending threw overboard its ballast of woman's virtues, he was sentenced to imprisonment in spite of a defence that the cartoon lacked originality and was designed to have universal application. The new republic must have a path that is relatively free from obstacles.

This was not the end of reform. "Away with the fez," said the President. The fez is not an indigenous product of Turkey. Imported over a century ago to replace the unwieldy turban, it came, however, during that time to be a symbol of Turkish manhood and religion. But irrespective of whatever merit it might have in the minds of the rank and file, Kemal decided that it must abdicate in favour of the hat. For the fez was not only an uncomfortable head-piece of Greek origin, but it was directly responsible for a national inferiority complex, stood for nationalistic sterility and social retrogression, and marked the wearer as a follower of a fanatical religion that had kept the country from marching with Western civilization. The Gazi declared: "The time has gone by when a hat should be a symbol of religion. Religion is such a personal matter that it is no one's business but your own. . . Why should we by wearing the fez ticket ourselves as encouraging religious fanaticism, when our one idea is to end it forever?"

Having made his decision, he began to prepare the ground for reform. The Republican Guard, upon whom he could put indubitable reliance, were furnished with képis to take the place of brimless kalpaks, which had inherent limitations in not furnishing a shade for the eyes. That religious difficulties might be avoided, the soldiery were informed that they could reverse their képis when they said their prayers. This step was taken without difficulty; and before very much of the year 1925 had passed, all

Turkish soldiers, sailors, and gendarmes were wearing the head-gear of the West. Kemal himself set the style by appearing in one kind of hat after another, and then gave orders that all civil servants should follow his example. Newspapers everywhere had something for headline; and Turkish males were all agog over the important subject of headdress. Not a few translated their new interest into action, forever putting aside the fez with no other compulsion than a desire for social adaptation.

This careful preparation on the part of the Turkish President was followed by the passage by the National Assembly in 1925 of the much-heralded "hat law," which made the wearing of the hat by the Turkish citizens compulsory. Of all the reforms instigated by the dictatorial ruler of Turkey, this one received the most opposition. Antagonistic public opinion boiled up: the hat law cost the lives of several men. But the people very shortly obeyed. And why not? Were not the Tribunals of Independence at work enforcing the law, decreeing not uncommonly a ten years' sentence at hard labor for an infraction?

With the fez went the Arabic alphabet. "In front of the highly revered tomb of Eyoub Ensari, standard bearer to Mohammed the Conqueror when he took Constantinople, there is a beautifully carved grill, bearing a wonder-working Arabic inscription. Mothers, pressing their palms upon it and then rubbing the faces of their children, keep its surface brightly polished. Yet few can read it, and I have found none who can translate it." In an article in which this dramatic paragraph appears, Maynard Owen Williams¹ painted a drab picture of the illiteracy of the Turkish people. At that time eighty per cent. could neither read nor write, while at present the percentage has been reduced to forty. To a large extent this illiteracy could be charged to the complicated nature of the language. The Arabic alphabet contained nearly five hundred characters, was difficult to learn, and constituted a tremendous obstacle to the process of Westernization.

Change to the Latin alphabet had been talked about for seventy-five years; but it was left to the dynamic initiative of a dictatorial régime to make it a *fait accompli*. Before the law compelling the change had been passed by the National Assembly, the nation was being prepared for the use of a new alphabet. As soon as a congress of Turkish philologists recommended the adoption of the Latin letters, President Kemal himself learned to use it. "Turk Postolari" were the newly printed words on the postage stamps; paper money carried the new characters; ships and trains blotted out the old Arabic-lettered names and substituted the

1. "Turkey Goes to School", *National Geographic Magazine*, Vol. LV, p. 94.

Latin-lettered new. The President held classes in his summer palace of Dolma Bagtche, once the home of the Caliph, where he taught officials of State; the press came out vigorously for the new reform; public lecturers explained the contemplated change; and people everywhere throughout Turkey began to manifest an interest. Then the National Assembly passed a law making the reform progressively compulsory. "The Turkish language has been a prisoner for centuries," said President Kemal, "and is now casting off its chains."

What of the Future?

It can be seen that nationalization and modernization are the twin principles upon which the Dictator-President is building his new Turkey. Within a decade he has transformed her from a backward Oriental country to a forward-looking modern State. Not only have the fez and the veil, polygamy and easy male divorces, and the Arabic alphabet passed into history, but other changes and substantial reforms can be credited to the new régime. For example, in the court-room a witness no longer swears "by Allah," but upon his honour; time is no longer computed from the flight of Mohammed from Mecca, but from the birth of Christ; titles have been abolished; the German commercial code, the Swiss civil code, and the Italian criminal code have formed the base of a revised legal system; and the secularization of schools has been followed by a legislative provision for compulsory attendance of children. Legislation permitting only Turkish citizens to work in certain industries has resulted in the exodus of thousands of foreigners. A labour law, based upon European experience, now regulates the hours and wages of work, the relation between labour and capital, and other matters. Women are finding a place in the industrial and political world. Policewomen are now no novelty, and early in 1935 seventeen women were elected to the National Assembly.

In the field of economic activity, future progress must meet its most significant test. Much remains to be accomplished, although great strides were made during the last dozen years. Agriculture, accounting for four-fifths of the activity of Turkey, while all too primitive, is being stimulated by agricultural schools, by the establishment of rural credit banks, and by schemes of reforestation. A programme of highway and railroad construction is in the process of being carried out. Since 1923, 1,500 miles of new railway have been added, and about 1,000 miles are now under

construction. Factories have multiplied ten times in the last ten years. The use of telephones and electricity, while by no means general, is rapidly increasing. Between 1923 and 1934 the towns using telephones jumped from one to thirty; and towns using electricity during the same time from four to ninety-seven.

Turkey faces unsolved problems, and must travel a road of exceeding difficulty. Poverty reigns in many places, and the leaders will not borrow in Western centres from well-grounded fear of foreign domination and control. Turks have more than a fair share of incompetence, which cannot be replaced speedily with the opposite virtue.

The destiny of Turkey probably lies with the present leadership. If this leadership can be maintained until the projected plans are well on their way toward consolidation, and until the new national psychology can permeate the generation now appearing, Turkey can probably be assured of a consequential national existence.