

CHAPTER V

ECONOMIC PENETRATION INTO TURKEY

For twenty-five years the mind of Germany has been directed toward imperialism. A continuous nation-wide propaganda has been carried on by the Pan-German societies and the press. The Navy League, founded in 1895 for the purpose of promoting a great navy, in which Krupp was one of the prime movers, grew to 600,000 members in two years' time. It enrolled more than a million persons in 1910. The demand for expansion was shared in by all classes. In recent years it approached a mania. The commercial achievements of Germany had intoxicated the nation. The big industrial groups, closely interrelated with the great banks, became only less arrogant than the old Junker aristocracy. They insisted that nothing should be permitted to stand in the way of the expansion of Germany, and that no nation, by act or threat, should check the growth of German trade.

But, as stated before, the world had already been appropriated.¹ The only territories outside of the spheres of influence of the other Powers were beyond Austria-Hungary, in the Balkan Peninsula, in Turkey and in western Asia, and even here England, France, and Russia had claims. The Balkan states contain 18,000,000 people. In Turkey there are 20,000,000 more. The people of these states, though hard-working, have but few mills and factories. They are but little given to industry. They would furnish a market for the workers of Germany. Asiatic Turkey contains great stretches of land suitable for the cultivation of wheat, cotton, and raw materials badly needed by German mills. There is iron ore, coal, and timber. The land between the Tigris and the Euphrates needs only irrigation to bring it back to its former fertility. For centuries Mesopotamia was so rich and populous that it excited the cupidity of surrounding

¹ It is to be remembered that trade with peoples subject to the greater Powers is not open to the world on equal terms. The closed door is applied. There are preferential tariffs and exclusive privileges. Were the whole of the backward world open to equal trade, the struggle for exclusive possessions would lose whatever justification it may have had.

nations. In the north there is sufficient rain for cultivation without irrigation. A large part of this territory had been reduced to a desert waste only because the Turkish Government has given no protection against the tribes of brigands. In the seventh century A. D., the Tigris-Euphrates Valley supported a population of probably 5,000,000 people, where today less than one-third of that number live as nomads. A British report on the subject, in 1911, stated that the land within the Tigris-Euphrates delta containing 12,500,000 acres of land could be easily reclaimed, and might be made to produce great quantities of crops. All that is needed is transportation, and irrigation in those sections that are in need of water. And irrigation-works are of comparatively easy construction. With this accomplished, wheat, cotton, rice, dates, and many other semitropical crops could be produced in great abundance as they were in ancient times. Under proper cultivation enough wheat and cotton can be raised to free Germany from dependence on England and the United States.

Around the eastern shores of the Mediterranean are harbors to be developed. The Eu-

phrates and Tigris offer opportunities for river-traffic like the Rhine. There is timber to be gathered from the mountainsides. Hundreds of millions of dollars could be profitably expended in these development projects—projects estimated to yield immense returns to the investors. In a sense, Asia Minor and Mesopotamia may be likened to the prairies of America to the west of the Mississippi. They wait on security, capital, and labor to make this region very productive. In time it might become a prosperous centre of the world, as it was in the time of Herodotus. "If one can speak of boundless prospects anywhere," says Prince von Bülow, "it is in Mesopotamia."¹

Along with the trade opportunities and development projects, the Bagdad Railway would put Germany in a position of strategic advantage in the trade of the Far East. Her merchants could place their goods in Oriental markets in much less time than British ships could make the journey. The Bagdad Railway would be an express service to the east coast of Africa, to Asia, to India, and Australia as well. Moreover, the business of exchanging

¹ *Imperial Germany*, p. 96.

and distributing the wealth of southern Europe, Asia, and Africa would be transferred, in part at least, from England to Germany and Constantinople. With harbors and adequate transportation the centre of European-Asiatic finance and exchange might in time be shifted from London to Berlin. For the Mediterranean is the natural clearing-house of three continents. Here the trade of the Eastern world should be carried on. With a free port like that of Hamburg or Bremen established at Constantinople working in co-operation with the Berlin-Bagdad Railway this port of the Eastern world would be converted into a great trading and commercial centre as it was in mediæval times. The capture of trade and finance was one of the objects of German activity. It was one of the dangers to the economic life of Great Britain as well.

It was such possibilities as these that committed the industrial and financial classes of Germany to the drive to the East and a Teutonic empire extending from Berlin to the Indian Ocean. Here were opportunities for railroad-building, mining, works of internal improvement, the development of irrigation projects,

harbors, terminals, and warehouses. Here was a great hinterland, an empire like India to be exploited, to be financed, to provide a market for generations to come for the surplus wealth of Germany. Here were raw materials for her mills and factories. With such a market the population of Germany could increase with safety to 100,000,000 people, while her educated and commercial classes would find an outlet now open to them only in distant countries, where identification with the fatherland is soon lost. Here, too, close at home, was an opportunity for emigration. Here were fields for that kind of venture that the youth of Great Britain finds in every portion of the globe.

The German people generally were committed to the drive to the Orient. Even the working classes accepted it. The Germans as a people believe in their right to expand, to grow, to enjoy whatever gains and advantages accrue from colonial possessions. And Turkey and the Near East is the back door of the German Empire. Moreover, it was no man's land. It had not yet been appropriated. It was an opportunity like that of Great Britain in

India, Egypt, and South Africa, like that of France in Tunis, Algeria, and Morocco.

In this sense, the "Drang nach Osten" has the sanction of the German people. They were probably more interested in the validation of claims in this part of the world than in annexations in Belgium, France, or continental Europe.

In 1886 Doctor Aloys Sprenger published a pamphlet entitled "Babylonia," which he described as "the richest country of the past and the most remarkable field of colonization of the present day. Of all lands of the world there is not one more inviting for colonization than Syria or Assyria. In that country there are no virgin forests to be cleared away, no natural difficulties to be conquered, but it is only necessary to scratch the earth, to sow, and to gather the harvest. The East is the only territory in the world which has not yet been swallowed up by a great Power. It is, moreover, the finest field for colonization. If Germany does not miss the Cossacks' opportunity and seizes it before they advance from their side, she will have acquired the best portion in the partition of the world."

About the same time another pamphlet appeared entitled "Asia Minor," by Doctor Kaerger, in which he urged the colonization of Asia Minor and demanded the immediate conclusion of a treaty between Germany and Turkey by which the Porte should be guaranteed against all aggression in return for concessions which would facilitate the directing of German emigration toward the fertile regions of Turkey, and the establishment, later, of a customs union between the two countries. "To create colonies and German culture in Turkey," wrote Kaerger, "is a plan which, without taking into consideration its political or commercial consequences, is of special importance for Pan-Germanism. Because of the situation of this territory not only should the German Empire but also the whole of the German people contribute to this task."¹

The *Alldeutsch Blätter*, one of the chief of the Pan-German organs, urged in 1895: "German interests demand that Turkey in Asia, at least, should be placed under German protection. The most advantageous step for us would be the acquisition of Mesopotamia and Syria and

¹ *Alldeutsch Blätter*, 1895, p. 224.

the obtaining of a protectorate over Asia Minor. A sultanate should be formed in the countries situated in the German sphere of influence, with a guarantee of the most complete autonomy for its inhabitants."

Mesopotamia, another writer said, should become "Germany's India."